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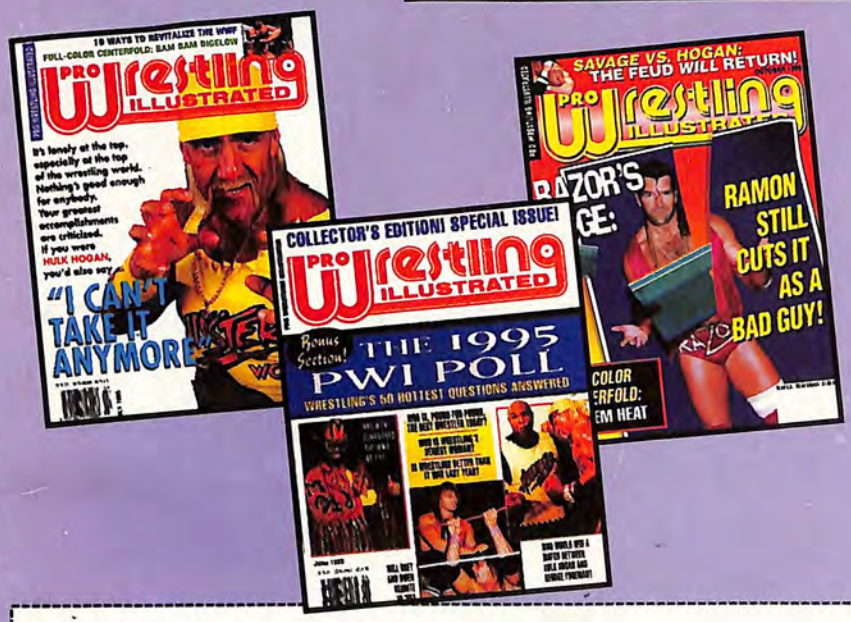

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THE Wrestler

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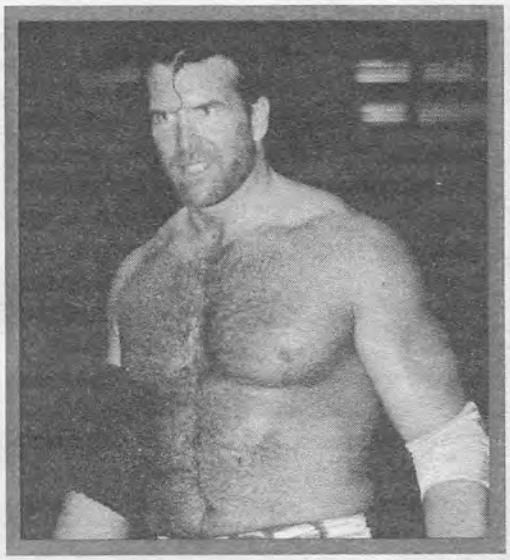

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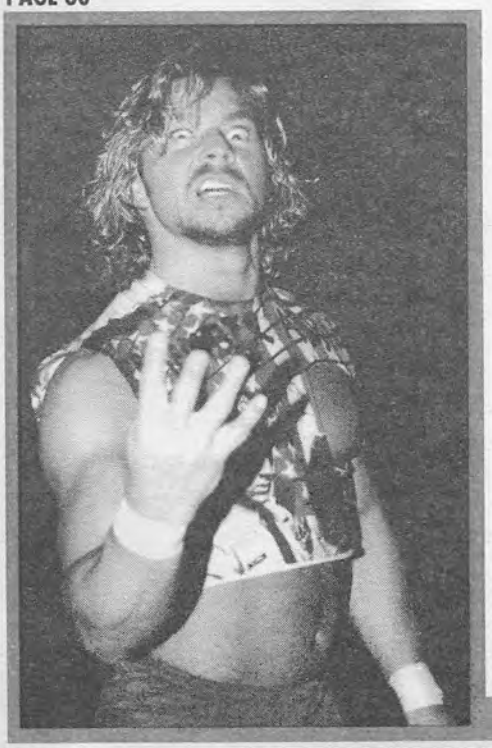

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YOUR LETTERS

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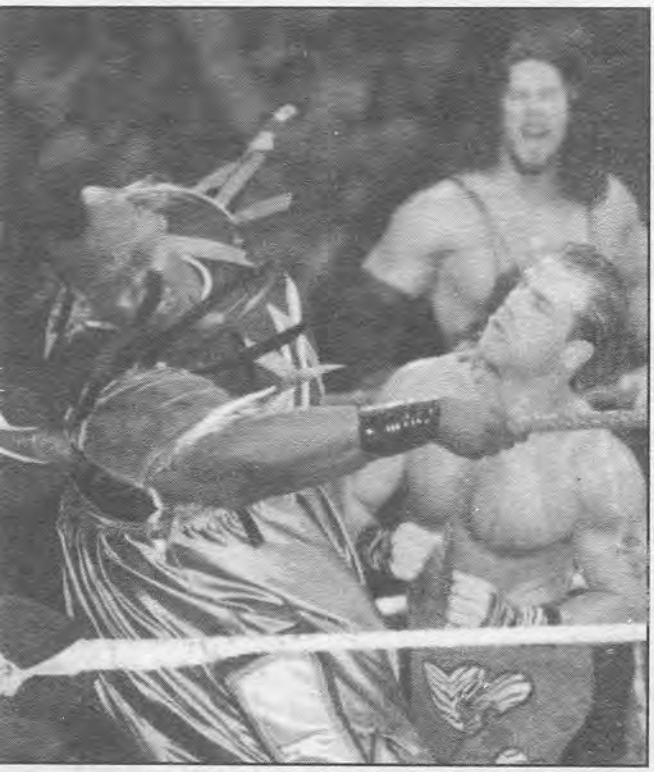


Shawn Michaels rocks Mabel with a right to the jaw. Reader Patti Uher is glad Michaels came back after he suffered through a bout with postconcussion syndrome and admires his dedication to wrestling.

SHAWN'S SECOND CHANCE

As a longtime fan of "The Heartbreak Kid," I wasn't surprised at all when Shawn Michaels returned to the ring after suffering such serious head injuries. I've been following his career since he wrestled in the AWA, and I know how hard he has worked to get this far.

What happened to him last October in Syracuse, New York, was unfortunate, but he overcame the physical problems he had after getting beaten up outside that nightclub. As a loyal fan of Michaels, I will always be concerned about what could happen to him in the ring, but I admire his determination to be the best, and his desire to try to fulfill the dreams he had as a young boy. I wish him all the best in pursuing them! No matter what, he'll always be a champion to me.

PATTI UHER
Scranton, PA

BEST IS YET TO COME

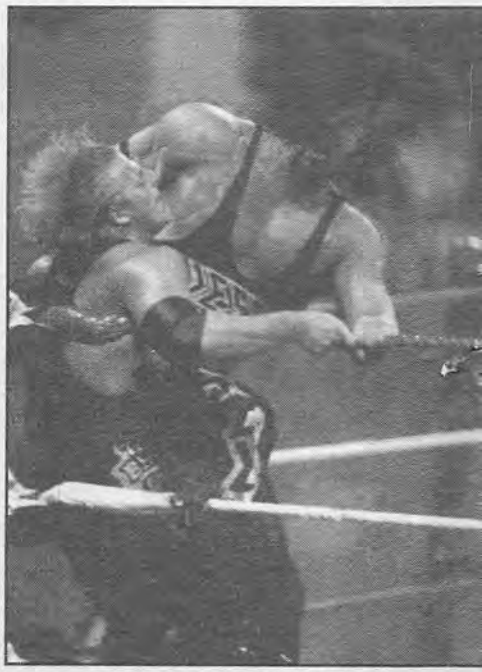
Diesel may have had the best year of his career in 1995, but I think he has even better days ahead of him. Many athletes in different sports have had incredible streaks, only to go on to accomplish even more. Just look at Mario Lemieux of the Pittsburgh Penguins. He is consistently the best hockey player on the ice, and there is little else for him to accomplish, yet he remains an integral part of the team. Michael Jordan came back to the NBA after dominating the competition for so many years and continued his impressive career.

Diesel can learn from these great athletes. Even though he spent a year on top of the wrestling world, there is still a lot more he can accomplish. He just has to have the desire to do it. Who knows? Maybe "Big Daddy Cool" will overshadow everyone and remain the best in the WWF for years to come. He has the ability, charisma, and now the attitude to do so.

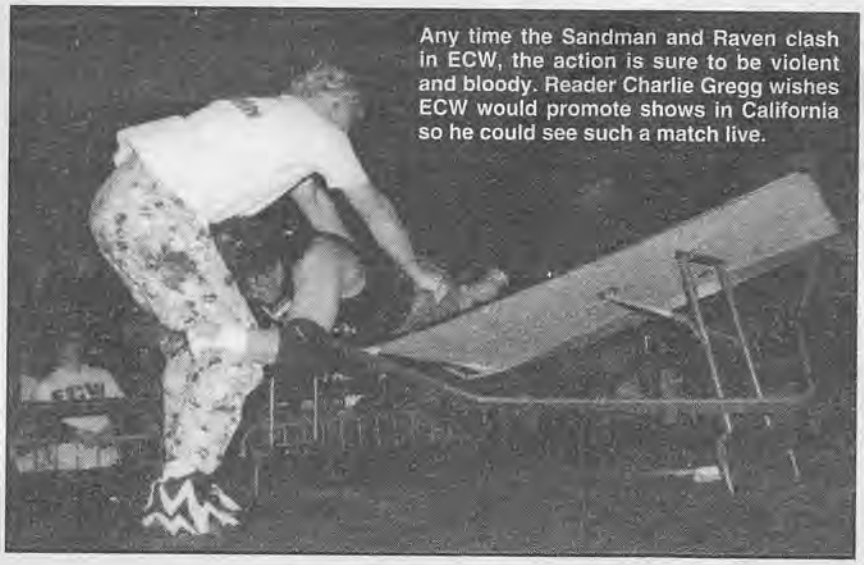
JANET HAAS
Norman, OK

SELF-DESTRUCTING SUPERGROUP

I believe that the latest incarnation of The Four Horsemen will



Many people believe Diesel (shown against Owen Hart) will never come close to repeating the success he had in 1995. Not reader Janet Haas. She still thinks there's a lot he can accomplish.



Any time the Sandman and Raven clash in ECW, the action is sure to be violent and bloody. Reader Charlie Gregg wishes ECW would promote shows in California so he could see such a match live.

self-destruct, and I think there are problems with every member of the group. Arn Anderson and Ric Flair have their hands full with Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage, and already there is dissension in the ranks. Brian Pillman left the group in February. He was out of control. And I doubt if Chris Benoit really has the desire to perpetuate the legend of the Horsemen. Like Pillman, he is a new breed of competitor, different than Horsemen veterans such as Tully Blanchard and Ole Anderson. Benoit and Pillman both have impressive records, but they need to establish their reputations on their own, not by riding the coattails of a dying supergroup.

Benoit, like Pillman already has, needs to realize that he isn't going to become a superstar as a member of the Horsemen. I think Flair and Arn need to be sent to the glue factory, because the era of the Horsemen is over.

GARY THOMPSON
Las Vegas, NV

AN EXTREME REQUEST

Every time I go to a wrestling event, it usually ends up being either a WWF or WCW card. No promotion besides those two runs shows in this area. I think I deserve to get a chance to get extreme. By that, I am referring to Extreme Championship Wrestling. I am sick of seeing Bret Hart's pink and black and "Hulkamania" lying on its death bed. I want blood, guts, and action. ECW needs to come to San Bernardino soon, or I might forget how fun professional wrestling can be.

CHARLIE GREGG
San Bernardino, CA

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

I can't believe Jerry Lawler used the Cleveland Browns moving to Baltimore as an excuse for losing the USWA belt to Ahmed Johnson in November. So he was a little distraught over the announcement. Big deal! Maybe he lost because he underestimated Ahmed Johnson's ability and strength. Maybe if he spent more time in a gym and less behind a microphone, he would have had a chance against Johnson.

BLAINE EDWARDS
Detroit, MI

NO COMPARISON

How can Harry Simon compare Adam Bomb to Disco Inferno ("The Dean Of Disco," April 1996)? Although Adam Bomb is no longer in the WWF, he is still my favorite wrestler. Bomb was awesome, and to compare him to Disco Inferno is ridiculous! How

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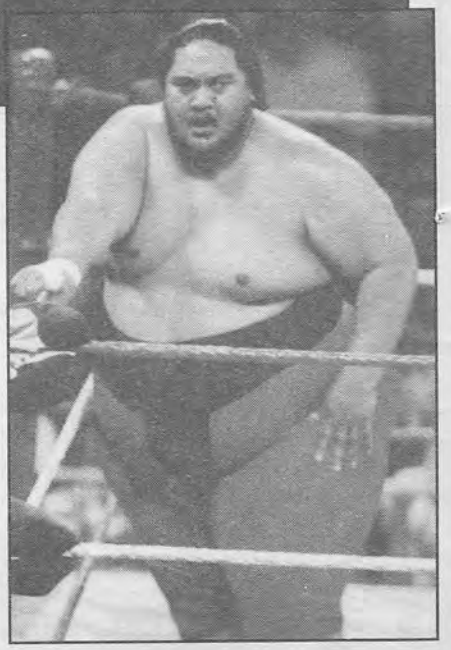
WHAT'S HAPPENING

By Bill Apter

That's a smiling Big Van Vader with Mexican promoter Antonio Pena, World Wrestling Peace Festival organizer Steve Nakada, and Antonio Inoki (above). Vader hopes to wrestle at that event in Los Angeles on June 1; Yokozuna (right) would probably like to be his opponent.



JUST DAYS AFTER **Big Van Vader's** WWF suspension was lifted, the 450-pound monster wreaked havoc at the WWF's In Your House VI pay-per-view card.

During an IYH match in which **"British Bulldog" Davey Boy Smith** looked like he was about to be pinned by **Yokozuna**, **Jim Cornette** ran into the ring and smashed Yoko on the back with a tennis racket. Yoko then went after Cornette, but he was stopped when Vader entered the ring in street clothes and began pummeling him. Yoko fought back valiantly, going punch for punch with Vader, but Smith and Cornette quickly joined the fray and helped to bring Yoko down.

At that point, Vader reached into his coat pocket, pulled out a pair of handcuffs, and handcuffed

Ric Flair and his two lovely ladies, Woman and Elizabeth, make their way to the ring. These three are causing all sorts of trouble for Randy Savage and Hulk Hogan these days.

Yokozuna to the ring ropes. All three rulebreakers then repeatedly beat on Yoko with Cornette's racket. Finally, after Vader floored a referee and threatened several other WWF officials with bodily harm, **Clarence Mason**, the lawyer who helped get Vader reinstated in the WWF, jumped into the ring and ordered Vader to stop. Later in the evening, acting WWF President **Roddy Piper** announced that Vader and Yokozuna would battle at WrestleMania XII and that they would be welcome to bring any weapons they wanted into the match.

But before you go calling Vader a monster, read on. The monster can show some class at times.

The World Wrestling Peace Festival is slated to start on Friday, May 31, and the huge card that will be part of the festival is set to take place on June 1 at the Los Angeles Sports Arena. Vader, who hopes to compete on the card, showed up at a luncheon to shake hands with **Antonio Inoki**, the man who beat him by submission in Japan in January. Inoki, who is organizing the event, welcomed Vader, who was also greeted by Mexican promoter **Antonio Pena** and Peace Festival organizer **Steve Nakada**.

Wrestlers from the WWF and WCW, as well as several Japanese and Mexican federations, were expected to participate on the card, which will also feature amateur wrestling and some martial arts competitions. Strange seeing the words "Vader" and "Peace" in the same paragraph, isn't it?

Still looks odd, doesn't it—**Elizabeth** accompanying **Ric Flair** to the ring? And I never thought she would make friends with someone as devious as **Woman**, who also accompanies Flair to the ring for his matches. Elizabeth told everyone during one televised interview that "I had to walk behind

(Continued on page 70)

STEVE ANDERSON'S VIEW

NO HOLDS BARRED

with David Rosenbaum

SHE TURNED her back on the man she used to love and, suddenly, Elizabeth looked frumpy. Those legs, which once looked so long and lean, were covered by an unflattering pair of black knee socks, and those once-slender arms now hang heavily. One day, she was beautiful. The next, she looked bitter and not so lovely.

Or perhaps Elizabeth was just tired after a long night in Ric Flair's hospital gurney.

There are a lot of mixed signals going out here, and most of them are coming from Flair and Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth and Randy Savage came to Hulk Hogan's aid just weeks before SuperBrawl VI, who would have predicted she was plotting against the "Macho Man"? Who would have thought that Liz could turn into such a bitter woman?

Last time I checked, Ric Flair was a married man with a devoted wife, Beth, back home in Charlotte, North Carolina. Not only does he have no business spending a night in a hospital bed with Elizabeth and Woman, he has no right trying to make us believe he did even if he didn't, which is what I think is the case. If Flair's trying to impress us, forget about it. Flair impressed me a long time ago with his wrestling skills. I don't need to know about his carnal knowledge.

As for Elizabeth, the first sign that this woman had gone bad was very apparent at Clash of the Champions XXXII in January, when she arrived on the arms of Randy Savage and Hulk Hogan. Miss Liz, who used to dress herself in elegant gowns and tasteful party dresses, was decked out in a low-cut blouse that showed more of her than we ever knew was there. The girl who you'd love to bring home to Mom was no longer dressed for the visit.

Maybe it was the company she was keeping. Anyone with an ounce of insight, no less knowledge of wrestling history, knew there was no way Woman could stay on the straight-and-narrow. She never has been able to and never will be able to. Rick Steiner, for one, can tell you all about that. He fell in love with Woman, only to have his

(Continued on page 74)

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BLINDSIDED

BY ANDY RODRIGUEZ

ANIMAL LOOKED AT Hawk, and Hawk looked at Animal, and from that point on, everything was different in WCW. When The Road Warriors say they're putting on their game faces, they mean it literally. Applying their colorful face paint can take up to an hour, depending upon degree of difficulty, but Animal and Hawk needed only a split-second to feel the heat.

It took The Road Warriors 3½ years to get back into the ring and only about a millionth of that time to regain the feeling of teamwork and mutual mental awareness that made them the greatest tag team of the 1980s, maybe the most dominant team of all-time. The past sports year has seen Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson make heralded comebacks, but the return of The Road Warriors is the most important return of all.

I say this because basketball was doing fine without Michael and Magic. A new breed of superstars, led by Shaquille O'Neal, Grant Hill, and David Robinson, had captured the imagination of NBA fans. The two-time NBA champion Houston Rockets were at least the equal of any of their recent predecessors.

You couldn't say the same for wrestling. Without The Road Warriors and Rick and Scott Steiner, tag team wrestling had been reduced to a mass of interchangeable, unimposing teams with no one dominant factor. You know there's something amiss when Sting and Lex Luger, two men who prefer wrestling on their own, can slap together a tag team and shoot to the top in a matter of weeks.

They're back!

That wasn't the case in the 1980s, when every team aspiring to be the best had to deal with a thunderstorm known as The Legion of Doom.

"Don't you know it," Animal growled. "There are still a lot of good tag teams around, but there wasn't a great tag team until The Road Warriors got back into action. The word is out that kindergarten's over. Now the real schooling begins. We're back with a vengeance!"

The Road Warriors had no doubts about their effectiveness upon returning. They're best friends who work out together and think the same thoughts. Timing could have been a problem in that first match back, but it wasn't, because Animal and Hawk were on the same page they were on way back when.

This thing happens all the time. Two friends who haven't spoken to each other in years finally talk and pick up the conversation just where they left off. Animal and Hawk did the same thing in a wrestling sense.

"I know what he wants to do, and he knows what I want to do, which is to kick butt," Hawk said. "There's not much to this. We storm the ring and beat up the wimps. They try to fight back, but they can't stand up to us. It's easy."

Any concern over his oft-injured back was immediately put to bed by Animal.

"I feel great," Animal said. "Good news for me, bad news for the pansies."

Maybe it's too early to fit Animal and Hawk for a new pair of WCW World tag team belts, but the inevitable can't be far off. Animal and Hawk are still relatively young and in excellent shape. Their arms and chests are huge, and they don't seem to have put on an ounce of fat. It's as if Hawk and Animal were planning to come back all along and didn't want anybody in on the secret.

"Nobody was going to tell us where to come back and when," Animal said. "It was our choice all along. We still do things the way we've always done it—on our terms."

For at least the near future, The Road Warriors have set the terms for the WCW World tag team title picture. From now on, all roads go through Animal and Hawk. The look is back. □

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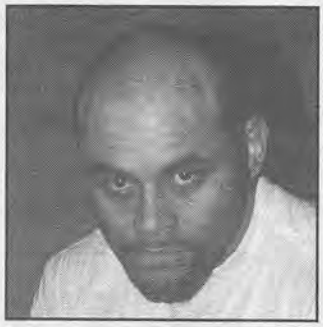
Thumbs Up

Each Issue, *The Wrestler* will praise the noteworthy and damn those who violate the honor of wrestling. The praiseworthy receive a Thumbs Up, the disgraceful are marked with a Thumbs Down. Here is this month's roll of honor and shame.

Thumbs Up to Animal. A Road Warriors reunion became reality when Animal decided his back was up to the constant punishment he knew he would sustain in the vigorous WCW tag team wars. According to insiders, Hawk was ready to return "whenever Animal gave the word," but after 3½ years, it looked like the word might never come. Finally, Animal decided his hunger for wrestling was too strong and that he had no choice but to return to the sport he loves. "My back feels great," Animal said. "It's been a long time—too long—since The Road Warriors got to waste some pansies!" We couldn't have said it better!



Thumbs Up to Konnan. The Mexican star has made quite an impact since arriving in WCW and has given the U.S. title the boost it needed since One Man Gang won the belt. Konnan's victory over OMG revitalized the U.S. title picture and has given fans a hot new star to latch on to. Better yet, Konnan has aggressively defended the belt. Sometimes wrestlers have a hard time branching out after leaving their native country. Konnan, on the other hand, nearly won the ECW title in January and is make giant strides toward becoming a superstar in WCW. Nobody's asking, "Who's Konnan?" anymore.

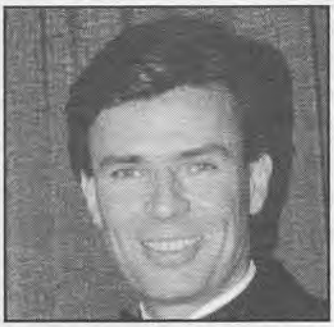
Thumbs Up to Raven. It's a ballgame again in ECW now that Raven has staked his claim to the heavyweight championship, formerly held by The Sandman. The Sandman had a lock on the belt, but Raven, a nasty boy in his own right, and one of the toughest men in a federation known for tough men, slugged it out in a backstreet brawl with Sandman and came out on top. If ECW needed another war, it has one right here. We suspect that the always morose Raven will get better and better now that he has his hands on the ECW title. He might even be able to brawl his way right to the top of wrestling.

Thumbs Up to Antonio Inoki. It has occurred to us that if the WWF and WCW ever get together for a supercard, Antonio Inoki's going to be the man to unite them. The all-time Japanese great has a way of bringing people together. For example, at press time, Inoki was working on putting together a supercard (tentatively scheduled for June 1 in Los Angeles) with wrestlers from several Japanese, Mexican, and U.S. federations, including, possibly, the WWF and WCW participating. Inoki's the ambassador of goodwill who might be just the man to make a lot of wrestling fans' dreams come true. Let's all hope it happens.

Thumbs Down

Thumbs Down to Woman. We know Elizabeth has to be held accountable for her own actions, but we have to believe Woman had a hand in convincing her to turn against Randy Savage, her ex-husband, and help Ric Flair beat him for the WCW World title at SuperBrawl VI. We could tell by the way the two of them celebrated immediately after Flair won the belt. Considering Woman's track record, we wouldn't be surprised if she turned against Flair once things go wrong for him and the other Horsemen. Elizabeth and Woman could prove to be a dangerous combination in WCW. Right about now, we wish they had never met.

Thumbs Down to Diesel. Out of control and with absolutely no regard for others, Diesel has taken irreversible steps into the land of rulebreakers. The former WWF World champ was so frustrated by his failed attempt to regain the belt at a recent Madison Square Garden card that he grabbed it, bashed champion Bret Hart, then pummeled "The Hitman" until The Undertaker charged into the ring to save him. Wonder what Kathie Lee Gifford, who once had Diesel on her talk show, thinks of him now. One of wrestling's finest ambassadors has turned into a mean, angry man. Not that Diesel cares, but we liked the old guy better.



Thumbs Down to Eric Bischoff. The sophomoric fighting between the WWF and WCW had already gone too far when the lights went out during a live February 5 *WCW Monday Nitro* broadcast. When the lights came back on, Bischoff, without naming names but with clear intent, said, "Desperate people do desperate things." It was a clear and dirty shot at the WWF, as Bischoff admitted a week later when he apologized for "suggesting" that the WWF had something to do with the power failure. Too late and not enough, Eric. It's time for the people who run the WWF and WCW to start acting like grownups. The fans will be the judge of which is better.

Thumbs Down to Roddy Piper. Sometimes you don't know what you've got until it's gone. We thought former WWF President Jack Tunney was an awful administrator who made one bad ruling after another. Interim President Gorilla Monsoon was a biased arbiter and only a slight improvement over Tunney. Now the WWF has Roddy Piper as its acting president, and Tunney and Monsoon never looked so good. Piper's decision to pull a title shot from former champion Yokozuna and give it to Tatanka was unreasonable. Jerry Lawler had earlier asked for a title shot at Bret Hart and was turned down. Piper said all the shots were taken. This "Rowdy Scot" is out of control.

CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

Baltimore, MD *(Correspondent—David Joyner):* Sting has seen enough of The Giant in the last few months to know that the only way to beat the 7'4" monster is to knock him off his feet and attack him while he's lying prone on the mat. In the beginning of this bout, the "Stinger" kept bounding off the ropes and trying to knock the mighty Giant off his feet with shoulderblocks, but he met with absolutely no success.

He tried grabbing his hair, kicking him in the stomach, and a lot of other things, but nothing Sting did to The Giant did much damage in a match they had in Baltimore. The Giant won it with a powerslam.

Finally, The Giant had enough. He pounded Sting with forearms, then threw him out of the ring and pounded him some more. When the match moved back into the ring, Sting managed to regain his senses somewhat. He started attacking The Giant's right leg. It took quite a while, but he did get him down on the mat. When The Giant finally did go sprawling, most of the fans at Baltimore Arena were on their feet.

For a while, it looked as if Sting might find a way to turn the match around, but The Giant quickly regained his feet and suplexed Sting several times. He also showed remarkable agility by hitting Sting with two well-executed elbowdrops. Though the crowd tried to rally behind Sting, no one was able to will him to victory on this night. The Giant won by pinfall after executing a powerslam.

In other bouts: Alex Wright defeated Disco Inferno ... The Nasty Boys defeated Public Enemy in a lights-out street fight ... Kevin Sullivan, Meng, & Hugh Morris defeated Arn Anderson, Chris Benoit, & Scott Norton ... Lex Luger defeated WCW TV champion Johnny B. Badd to win the belt ... WCW World champion, "Nature Boy" Ric Flair defeated Randy Savage.

Bangor, ME *(Correspondent—John White Jr.):* Diesel's main concern right now seems to be getting his hands on The Undertaker and beating him up, but he is also trying desperately to win back the WWF World title. He got another shot at the belt when he faced champion Bret Hart in a steel cage match at the Bangor Auditorium.

"The Hitman" immediately went after Diesel's knees in this bout, hitting them with kicks and elbowsmashes. But even though "Big Daddy Cool's" legs were hurting, he wasn't about to let Bret out of the cage without a fight. Hart tried climbing up the side of the cage, but Diesel

(Continued on page 76)

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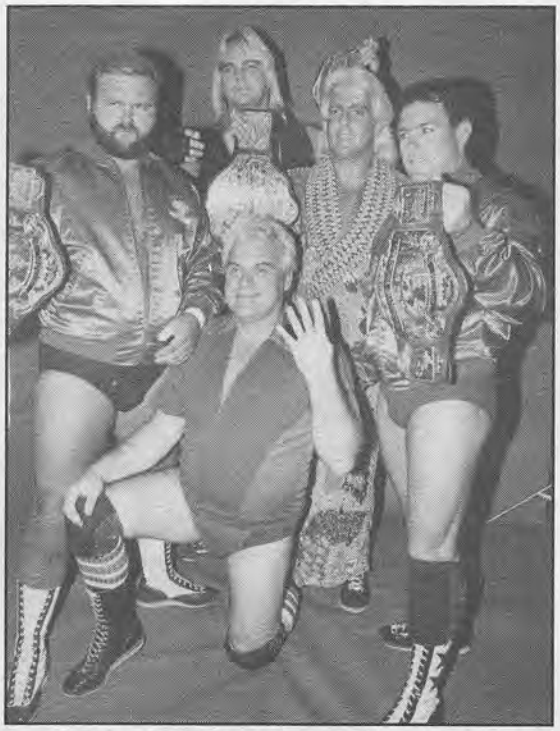
You ASKED Us

Here's the monthly feature that YOU get to write! It's your chance to have a top wrestler answer YOUR questions! Only the best questions will be answered, so put on your thinking caps and come up with some good ones! Address your questions—and who you would like to have answer them—to:

YOU ASKED US, c/o THE WRESTLER,
Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034.

Q: "I have a question for the best Horseman ever, Tully Blanchard: What do you think of the new Four Horsemen?" —Stacy McGuire, San Diego, CA

A: **"Mixed feelings, Stacy," said Blanchard. "On the one hand, I have nothing but the highest respect for Ric Flair and Arn Anderson, and I have to believe they know what they're doing with the group this time around, but on the other hand, I have an ego, and I don't mind admitting it. How can you compare any Horsemen group to the original? If Tully Blanchard isn't part of the Horsemen, then the group is second-rate, as far as I'm concerned. If I were in the Horsemen and some young punk like Brian Pillman started mouthin' off, I would have taken care of the problem before it got so far out of hand. Yeah, I guess I wish Flair and Arn and the rest of them luck, but I know these new Horsemen will never have the success we had."**



One of the most successful versions of The Four Horsemen was the one comprised of Arn Anderson, Barry Windham, Ric Flair, Tully Blanchard, and manager J.J. Dillon. Blanchard says the new Horsemen will never measure up to the Horsemen he was involved with.

* * *

Q: "I have a question for The Diamond Doll, Kimberly: Do you ever miss the company of 'Diamond' Dallas Page?" —Andrew Barnes, Toledo, OH

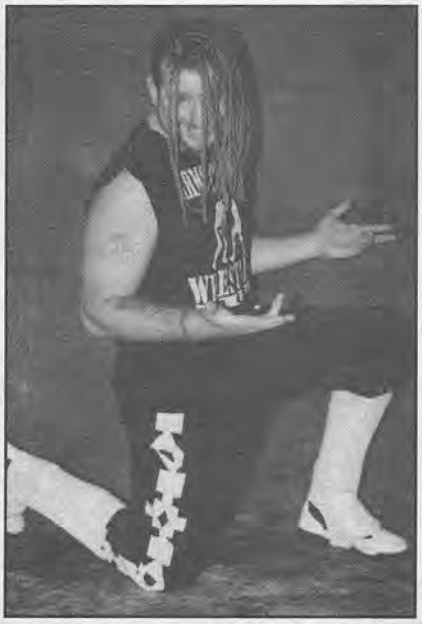
A: **"Not for a second!" said Kimberly. "Dallas walks around thinking women are his playthings and nothing else. When I was with him, he acted like I should be honored just to have the chance to walk to the ring with him. Then he'd order me around like I was his property. It was humiliating. Why would I miss that? Johnny B. Badd treats me with respect. I can't wait for his matches, because it's so much fun to stand in his corner and cheer him on. The best thing about Johnny is that he asks me for my opinion on stuff. He asks me if I think this strategy would work against this guy and stuff like that. I'm having the time of my life with him."**

* * *

Q: "I'd like to ask Jesse James Armstrong a question: Now that you're a fan favorite in the USWA, is there any chance you and Jeff Jarrett will reunite?" —Nancy Hammonds, Gulfport, MS

A: **"My view of 'Double-J' is the same as it was a few months ago," said Armstrong. "I think he's got loads of talent, and I think he's a good wrestler without me in his corner. But he**

(Continued on page 78)



Jesse James Armstrong, like his old friend Jeff Jarrett, is now a fan favorite in the USWA. He says he and "Double-J" aren't ready to reunite, but he thinks Jarrett would be better off if they did.

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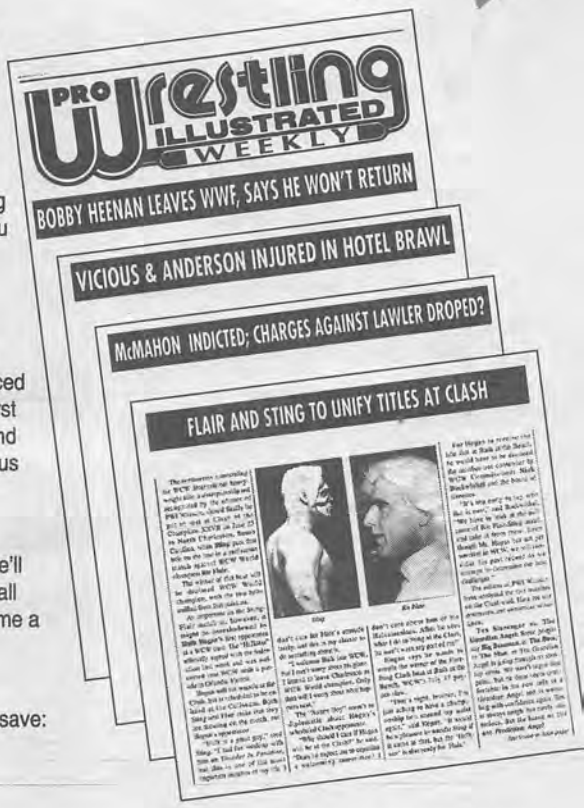

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INTRODUCING THE BLUE MEANIE

By Dave Lenker

WE COULD TELL you a lot about The Blue Meanie. We could go on for pages about The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* album and movie, and its effect on young people in the late-1960s and early-1970s.

But thousands of words couldn't better describe what the following sentence does: In a federation that includes Dances With Dudley, Bubba Ray Dudley, Sabu, The Sandman, Taz, and Mikey Whipwreck, a thing called The Blue Meanie is the craziest of them all.

He says he comes from Pepperland, the location of The Beatles' fantasy.

We happen to know for a fact that he's from somewhere in Michigan and started his career in his home state.

He thinks he's quick and agile. The truth is he's slow and plodding.

And any man who wears a half-shirt and cutoff shorts must be trying to show off his perfect physique. Well, any man except The Blue Meanie.

The Blue Meanie is a well-rounded 6'1", 350 pounds. But he is doing something about his weight. He works out semi-regularly with a Thighmaster that he insists was a personal gift from Suzanne Somers.

Here he is in all his strangeness: The Blue Meanie. This ECW wrestler/bodyguard has blue hair, a blue beard, painted-on glasses, and an odd outfit, but he doesn't think he's that unusual.

"The Bluuuuuue Meeeeeeanie is no ordinary man," said The Blue Meanie, who always refers to himself in the third person and usually stretches out the words "Blue" and "Meanie." "The Bluuuuuue Meeeeeeanie is special."

He definitely has that right. Anybody who walks around with a blue tuft of hair that sticks straight up, a blue goatee, painted-on glasses, and a goofy look on his face is certainly special.

Need further proof? Well, The Blue Meanie's long-term goal is to take over and rule the universe, and he thinks Stevie Richards is part of his master plan. That's what brought together Richards, Raven, and Meanie.

"He's sick in the head," said Shane Douglas. "He gets you thinking he's out of his mind, so you're wary of him. He should be in an insane asylum."

According to noted wrestling psychologist Dr. Sidney M. Basil, The Blue Meanie has all the characteristics of a schizophrenic.

"His mood changes and behavior are alarming," Basil said. "For example, I have seen him walk to the ring as if he was storming mad, and suddenly

We all live in a Yellow Submarine, and The Blue Meanie wants to be our boss. This strange fellow who claims to be from Pepperland—really, he's from Michigan—is a piece of work

Photos by Jason Ross Lavin

The Blue Meanie legdrops Dredd during an ECW match. Considering that he stands 6'1", weighs 350 pounds, and isn't very quick, he has a surprising number of effective moves in his repertoire.

start breaking out in laughter. He apparently has no control over his emotions, and I am still trying to discern whether he has control over his actions."

If that sounds disturbing, just read what The Blue Meanie has to say about himself.

"They're right about The Bluuuuuue Meeeeeeanie," he said about himself.

It's an odd tale. The Blue Meanie was introduced to ECW fans in November, when he came out of the crowd and hooked up with Richards. Noted one fan in attendance that night: "I'm standing there waiting to get a beer and suddenly I see this really fat guy with blue hair, and it looks like he has paint all over his face. A few weeks later, I turn on the ECW TV show and there he is."

One of the strangest things about this wrestler is that he rarely wrestles. He seems more interested in getting in on Richards and Raven's agenda, whatever that might be, and he says he "draws inspiration" from his friends. Yet he struts around the ring as if he has just beaten Hulk Hogan. It's the strut of a confident man, although Meanie always seems a bit confused.

Why do we say that? Because he's always looking for someone to shine his socks and he seemingly has a hard time taking yes for an answer.

"The Blue Meanie only takes no for an answer," The Blue Meanie explained.

"I have to say he is a bit demented," said Basil. "He only takes no for an answer. The man is not in good mental health."

What everyone wants to know is why doesn't he wrestle more, when in his first ECW match, against J.T. Smith, he showed surprising skill. He only lost because he missed with his version of the moonsault (the "Meanie-sault"). He also uses a move similar to Ahmed Johnson's "Pearl River Plunge," which he calls a "Meanie bomb."

It's impossible to imagine The Blue Meanie ever losing a bout of psychological warfare. Perhaps it's the plot: The Meanie is more interested in ruling the universe than ruling an independent federation based in Pennsylvania. He has bigger fish to fry, and those would be bluefish, of course. The Blue Meanie is so secretive about his plan that he refuses to divulge any information about his background. What you're reading here is all that's known, and that's not much.

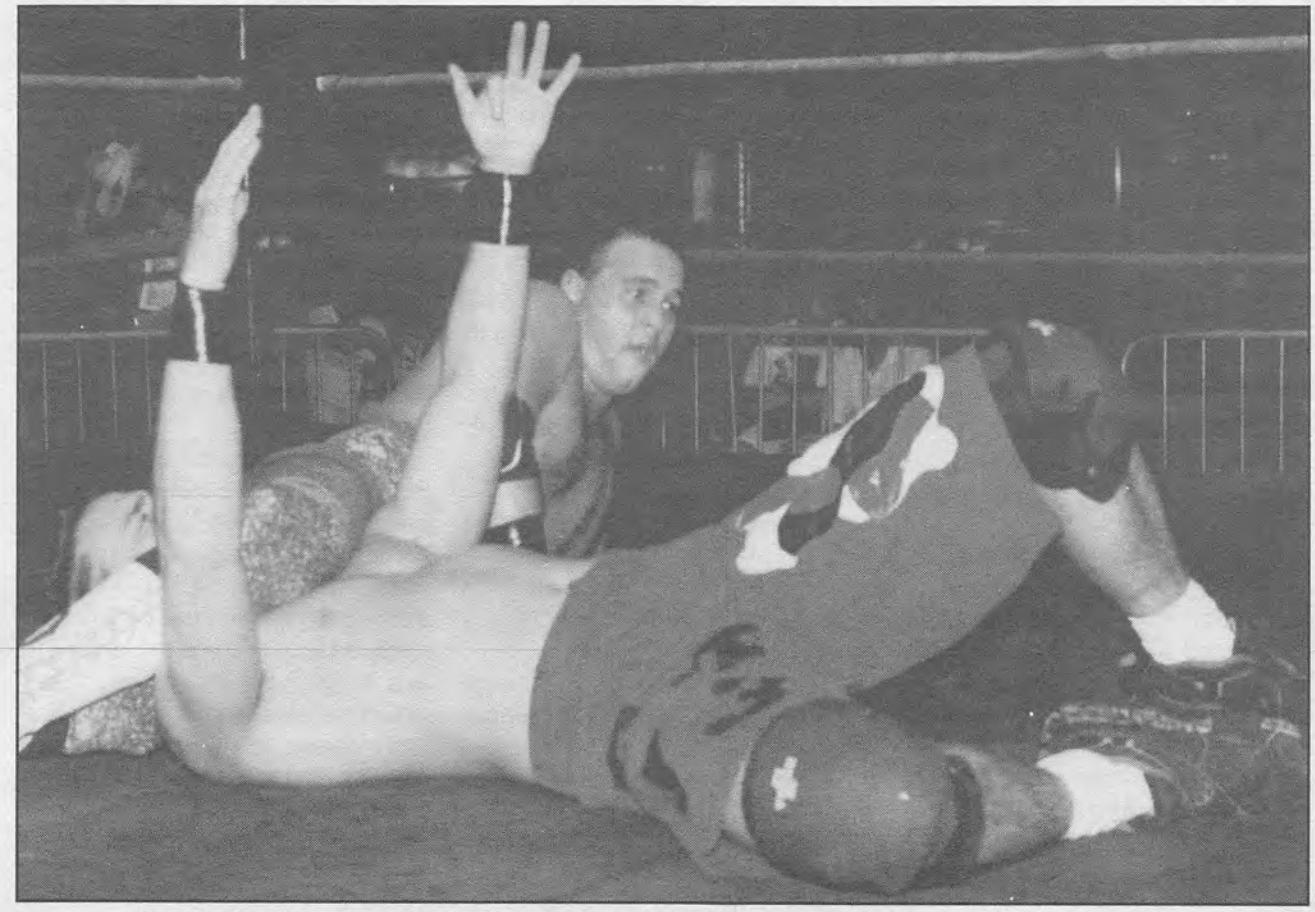
"If he's ruling the universe," Douglas said, "I'm moving!" □

THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

RAY

DOUG GILBERT

Each month THE WRESTLER'S panel of experts will offer candid opinions of one of wrestling's stars. Whether an up-and-coming youngster or an established superstar in his own right, our panel will always be frank and honest without fear of reprisal



Doug Gilbert uses a headscissors to wear down PG-13's Wolfie D. Our experts agree that Gilbert has a promising career ahead of him. Some think it's time he left the USWA.

CAPT. LOU ALBANO
"Tough kid. Anybody in wrestling who has the last name Gilbert has to be tough. From what I've seen of Doug Gilbert, brother, he's got a good mix of skills. He likes using his fists to get the job done, but he can surprise you with his quickness and all the different moves he can throw at you. He also has experience in Japan. That's important for any young kid if he expects to go places. I look for Doug Gilbert to be a big star in about two years or so."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has led 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.

KILLER KOWALSKI
"I think Doug Gilbert has potential. He won't back down from a fight. He has a lot of courage, and he isn't afraid to break a rule or two to get the job done. Sometimes he bites off a little more than he can chew, as they say. He's a lot like his brother, Eddie, was in that way. Sometimes he'll pick too many fights or go after a guy who he really doesn't stand a chance of beating at this point in his career. Maybe he should choose his battles more carefully."

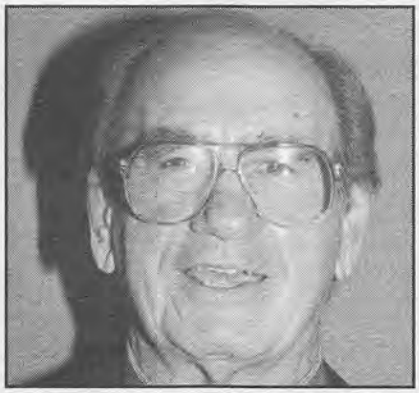
Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Reading, Massachusetts.

DORY FUNK JR.
"He's like Eddie in terms of style, and we all know how much success Eddie had. But one thing I've noticed about Doug is he doesn't have as bad a temper as Eddie. Eddie got so riled up and so intense in some matches that I swear he wasn't thinking straight and would end up losing. He also doesn't crave the spotlight as much as Eddie did. Eddie was out to prove he could be a star from the day he started. Doug is more patient. His day in the WWF or WCW will come."

Dory Funk Jr. held the NWA World championship from 1969 to 1973. He still wrestles from time to time, primarily in Japan.

FABULOUS MOOLAH
"I had a real long career in wrestling, but not everybody is as fortunate as me. My point is that it's time for Doug to take charge of his career. He's been wrestling in the USWA for a long time and he's done well, but it's time he gave it a shot somewhere else, maybe in the WWF or WCW. If you wrestle in the same place for a long time, you can get in a rut. You start wrestling the same people. Doug will get better if he tries wrestlin' in different areas."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



LOU THESZ
"Fundamentally sound. That's how I describe Doug Gilbert. His brother, Eddie, and his dad, Tommy, made sure of that when they trained him. But I also think Tommy Rich has helped Doug Gilbert a lot. They've been wrestling as a team for quite a while, and being around a man with Rich's experience can help a young wrestler a whole lot. I think one thing that Doug is missing is a spectacular finishing hold or move. If he comes up with that, he'll be that much better."

Lou Thesz held the NWA World title six times during his fabulous 50-year career. Many consider him the greatest all-around wrestler in history.

LANCE RUSSELL
"I get to see Doug regularly here in Memphis, and I don't always agree with his tactics, but I guess I said the same thing about his brother, Eddie. What I do have to say is that I've seen a lot of improvement in Doug over the past two years. He used to be a one-dimensional wrestler. Seemed like all he wanted to do was turn every match into an all-out brawl. Now he's a versatile wrestler who's capable of beating you in many ways. I enjoy watching him in the ring."

Lance Russell, a wrestling broadcaster since 1954, is now retired. He does periodic guest spots on WMC-TV in Memphis.

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2381	Beverly Hills 90210	3462	Dio	4282	Juliana Hatfield	3722	Peter Frampton	8341	Suzanne Vega
2444	Big Head Todd/Monsters	3472	Dire Straits	5262	Kansas	7441	Phish	8251	Talking Heads
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4673	Bruce Hornsby	3241	Faith No More	7931	Matthew Sweet	7283	RATT	8241	UB40
7771	Bruce Springsteen	3442	Fight	6322	Meat Loaf	7332	Red Hot Chili Peppers	8451	Ugly Kid Joe
2321	Bryan Adams	3471	Firehouse	6241	Megadeth	6273	Richard Marx	8743	Urge Overkill
2852	Bulletboys	3531	Fleetwood Mac	3841	Melissa Etheridge	7521	Robert Plant	8262	Van Halen
2881	Butthole Surfers	3673	Foreigner	6382	Metallica	7832	Rod Stewart	6341	Vince Neil
9433	Catherine Wheel	4362	Genesis	2651	Michael Bolton	7651	Rolling Stones	8461	Violent Femmes
9431	Cheryl Wheeler	8462	George Thorogood	6431	Midnight Oil	7652	Rollins Band	9271	W.A.S.P.
2461	Cinderella	4461	Gin Blossoms	6443	Mighty M. Bosstones	7871	Rush	9272	Warrant
2656	Collective Soul	4721	Grateful Dead	6463	Ministry	7223	Sacred Reich	9441	White Zombie
2663	Concrete Blonde	4731	Great White	6252	Mitch Malloy	7261	Santana	9463	The Who
2683	Counting Crows	4737	Green Day	6672	Morrissey	7374	Sepultura	9454	Wilson Phillips
2682	Coverdale/Page	4735	Green Jelly	6682	Motley Crue	6262	Sinead O'Connor	9671	World Party
2693	Cowboy Junkies	4861	Guns N' Roses	6681	Motorhead	7541	Skid Row	9371	Yes
2726	Cracker	4274	Hardline	6721	Mr. Big	7523	Slaughter	6251	YngwieMalmsteen
2723	Cranberries	4321	Heart	6331	Ned's Atomic Dustbin	7524	Slayer	1181	ZZ Top

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THE SHOCK 'N' WRESTLING CONNECTION!

These Electrifying Stars Are Redefining Wrestling In The '90s

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, it was the rock 'n' wrestling connection.

In the 1990s, it's the *shock* 'n' wrestling connection.

There's no question that we live in a time in which attention is often equated with success. The more attention you draw to yourself, the bigger success you are. And what better way to draw attention to yourself than to do something that shocks other people?

Just ask Howard Stern. Or Geraldo Rivera. Or Quentin Tarentino.

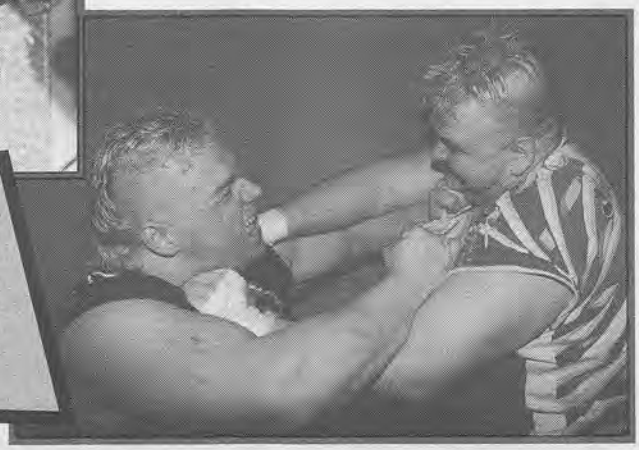
Or Goldust. Or Sabu. Or Public Enemy.

Shock is having its effect in wrestling, too. Win a match with an armbar submission? Sure, if you preface it with a moonsault out of the ring into a "Frankensteiner," launched off the shoulders of your tag team partner who is standing on a ladder balanced precariously on top of the steel cage. If the impact of the move breaks three or four tables, all the better.

But seriously: The stars in this section—most of them, anyway—aren't climbing through the ropes merely to shock. They're there to win matches and progress toward championship gold. A few of them, as a matter of fact, aren't particularly shocking, at least not to look at them walking down the street. (Despite that, we forge ahead and rank each star on a scale of 1-10 in terms of "shock value.") But they *are* electrifying the sport by introducing new elements to wrestling that haven't been there before, and that's more than enough to shock their unfortunate opponents!

It is an interesting element of this section that most of the stars either wrestle currently in ECW or have competed in ECW at one time. That's not a coincidence. As the sport's most brutal (and, some say, innovative) promotion, ECW is setting a standard for wrestling intensity that WCW and the WWF are making clear moves to match. But the stars in this section are here not because they have excelled in ECW (or anywhere else they've wrestled), they're here because they populate the edge, they're on the front lines of change both within and away from the ropes, they're possessors of the potential to reshape wrestling in their own (sometimes twisted) images.

Want to know where wrestling is headed in the next 10 years? Just turn the page ...



Cyndi Lauper and Hulk Hogan (above) were at the forefront of the world of wrestling in 1985, but a decade later, fans are more interested in things like the bloody feud between Axl and Ian Rotten (right). Shock 'n' wrestling has replaced rock 'n' wrestling.

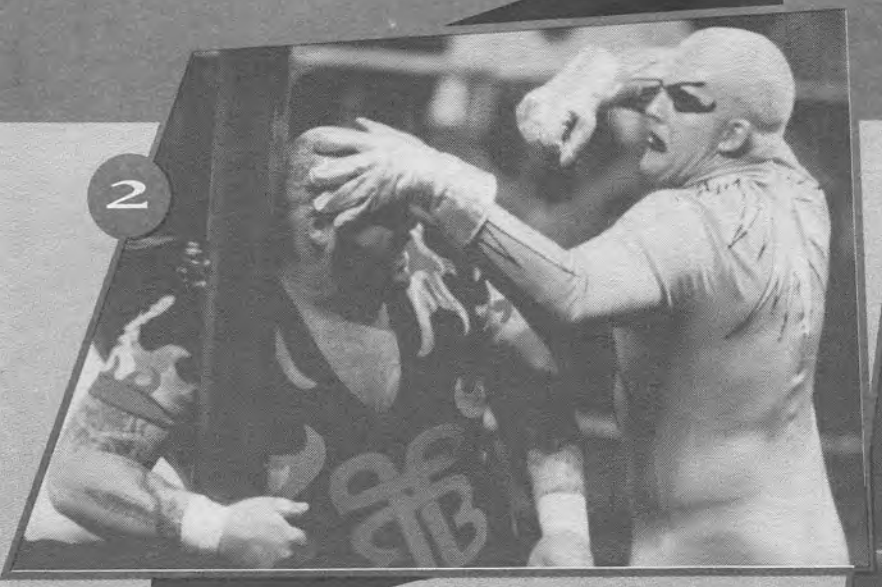
GOLDUST

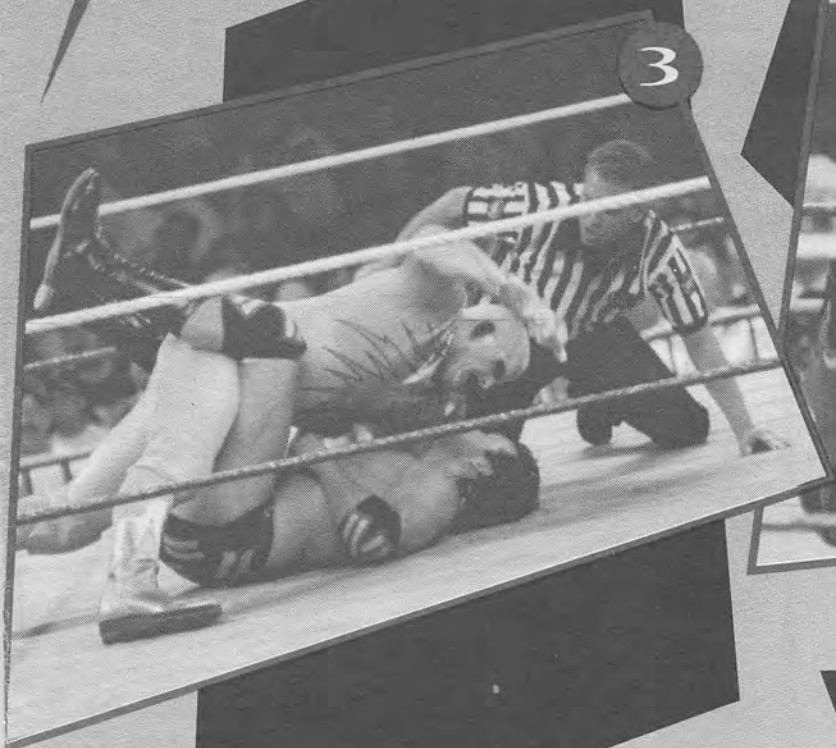
VITAL STATISTICS: The former Dustin Rhodes stands 6'5" and weighs in at 254 pounds ... Forget Hollywood; he's from Austin, Texas ... He made his pro debut on September 13, 1988 ... Currently competing in the WWF.

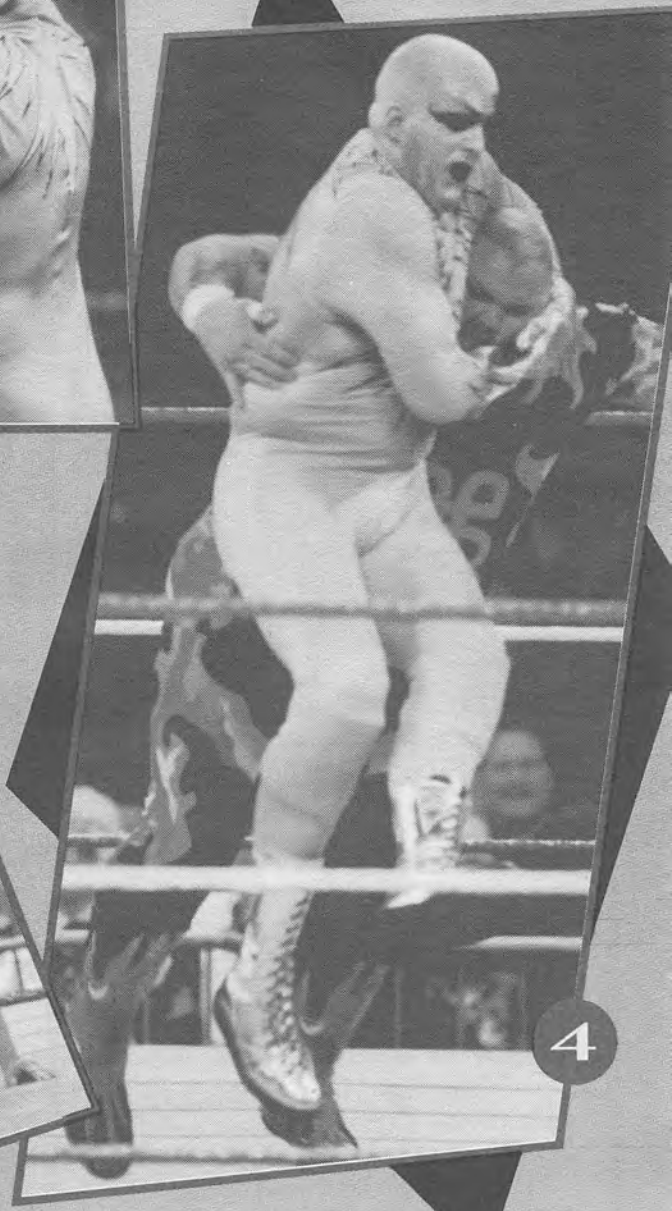
SHOCK VALUE: Are you kidding?! We'd give him an 11, but 10 is the limit. Even so, call it a 9.5 overall: We're forced to knock off a half-point for the fact that we know that deep-down, *really* deep-down, Dustin is still Texas tough, and he will return to his roots someday. Won't he? *Won't* he?! Well, Dustin had to do *something* to get his career going again ... but was this *really* the way to go? Apparently so: Goldust captured the Intercontinental gold from Razor Ramon at the 1996 Royal Rumble, proving that absurdity is only skin-deep.

WRESTLING IMPACT: Don't make the mistake Ramon did: Yes, Goldust is downright creepy, and yes, he's a ridiculous and disturbing sight. But beneath the makeup and bodysuit lies the heart of a Texas-tough competitor who is the son of the son of a plumber. Goldust has plenty of wrestling talent, solid thoroughbred bloodlines, and—as has become quite evident—the willingness to do anything to make an impact on the sport. Our bet is that impact is just beginning to be felt.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Is it absurd to say Goldust is the wrestler of the '90s? Not as much as you may think. "King Of All Media" Howard Stern rules radio and saw his *Miss America* volume become the fastest-selling book of all-time. Why? He's shocking, pure and simple. So is Goldust. Don't bet against him becoming "King Of All Wrestling."







1. A golden chop to the throat. 2. There's nothing like a glove to the face. 3. Fists fly when Goldust meets Razor. 4. The kind of "bulldog" Dustin used to love.

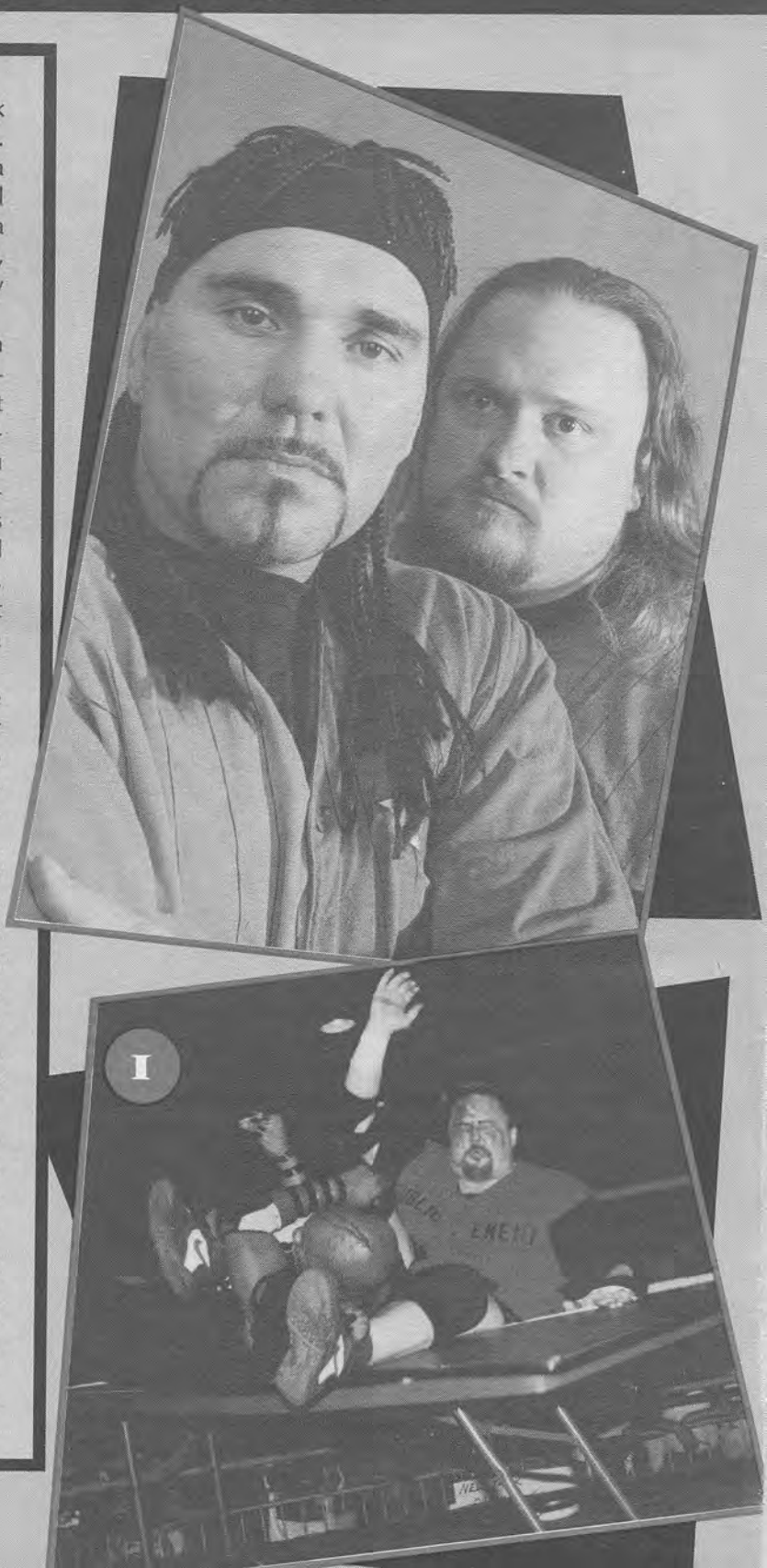
PUBLIC ENEMY

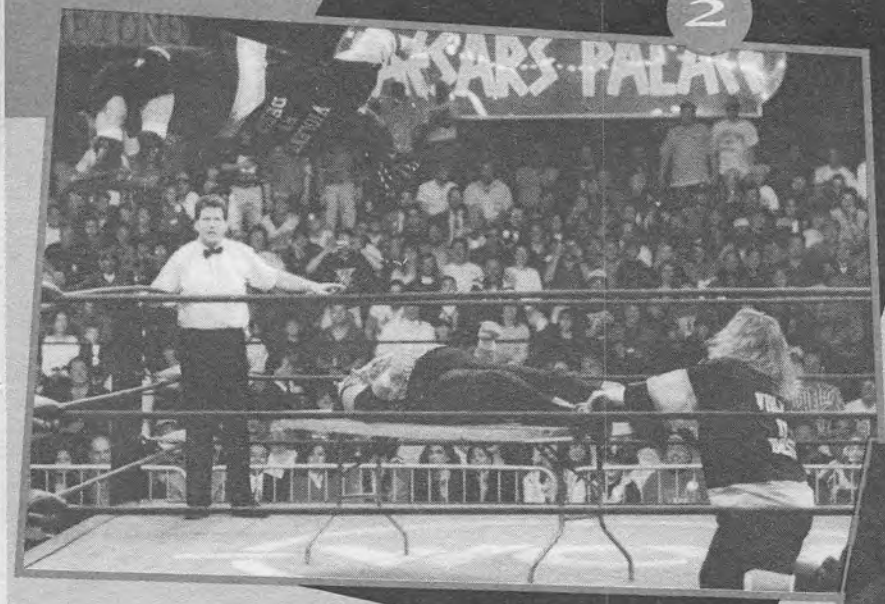
VITAL STATISTICS: Rocco Rock stands 6'2" and weighs 251 pounds ... Johnny Grunge is an inch taller and a dozen pounds heavier ... Both men hail from straight outta Compton, California ... Grunge began his pro career in 1987, but Rock debuted in 1978 ... Currently competing in WCW.

SHOCK VALUE: Just ask the fans in Caesars Palace in Las Vegas who witnessed Public Enemy's match against The Nasty Boys at Clash of the Champions XXXII in January. Maybe you heard it, too: stunned silence, punctuated by the sound of wood from a press table being broken over the heads and backs of Rock, Grunge, Brian Knobs, and Jerry Sags. Given that WCW's not used to this kind of carnage, we've gotta give PE a score of 8.9.

WRESTLING IMPACT: Remains to be seen, but there's no question that their mere presence in World Championship Wrestling is something of a breakthrough—and we don't just mean bodies breaking through tables, either. While Public Enemy grew up personally on the mean streets of Compton, they grew up professionally in the meaner rings of ECW. That Grunge and Rock's "extreme" sensibilities won them success in the most extreme of federations—four tag team titles in ECW—is no surprise. What is surprising is that WCW would embrace their brutality.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: If Public Enemy can manage to capture the WCW World tag team title in what is now a talent-heavy division (Nastys, Road Warriors, Harlem Heat, Luger and Sting—for starters), their extreme approach to the sport will be validated even more than it was when WCW signed them in the first place. Then what will teams do to try to *top* PE?





1. Another run-of-the-mill legdrop by Grunge. 2. Rocco's moonsault made Sags sag. 3. Grunge pans New Jack. 4. A little watermelon for a Gangsta.

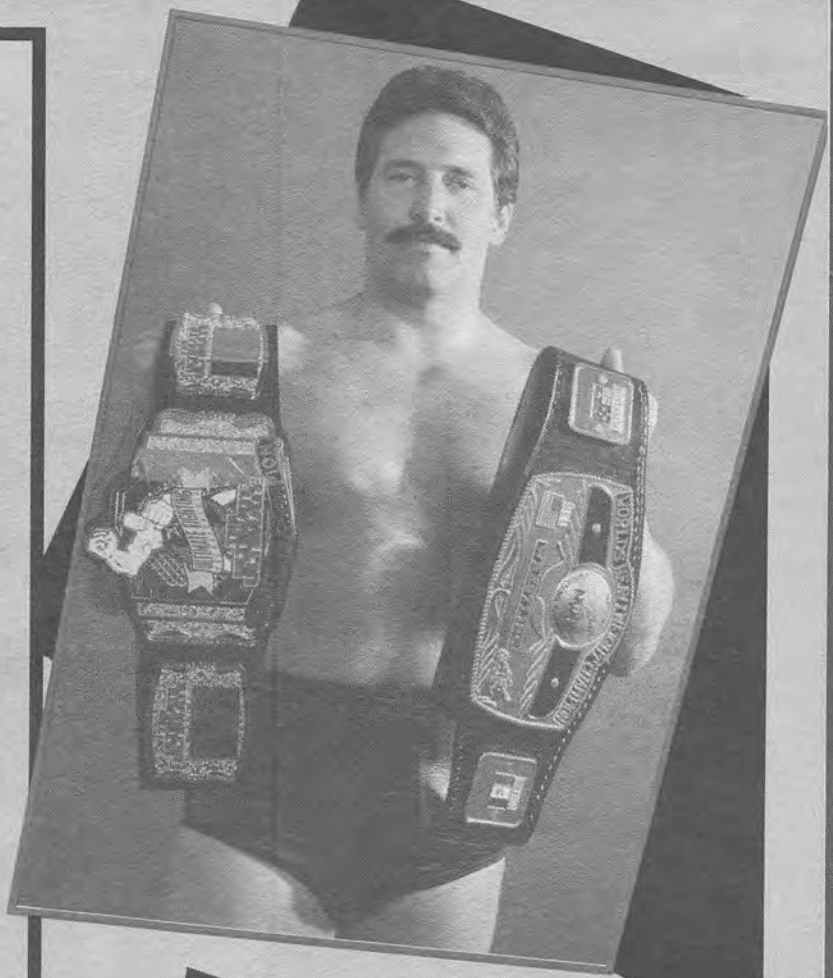
DAN SEVERN

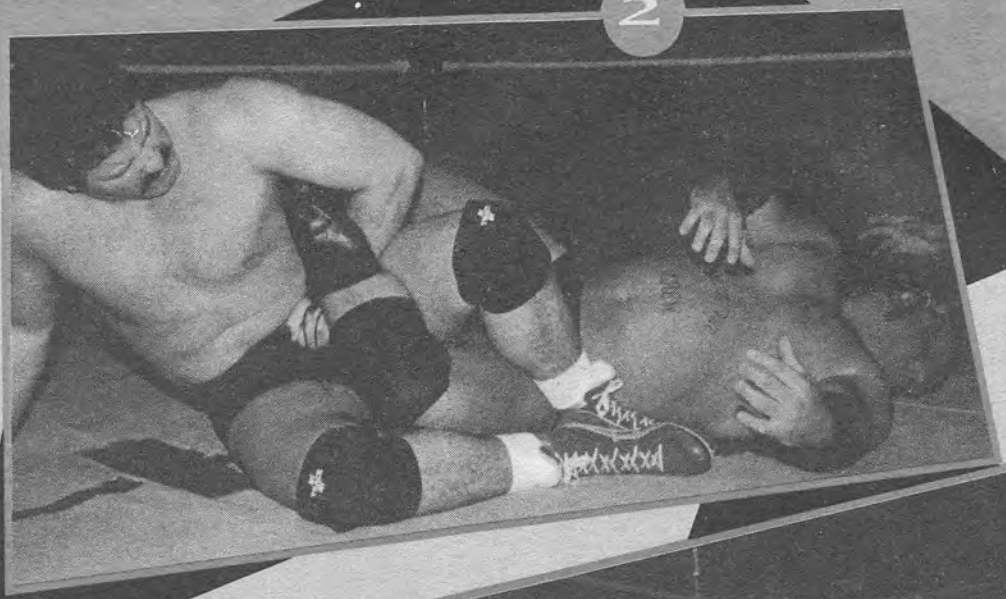
VITAL STATISTICS: The NWA champion and two-time UFC champion (UFC V and the Ultimate Ultimate) stands 6'2" and weighs 265 pounds ... Hails from Coldwater, Michigan ... Began his pro wrestling career in 1991 ... Wrestles sporadically on NWA-sanctioned independent cards.

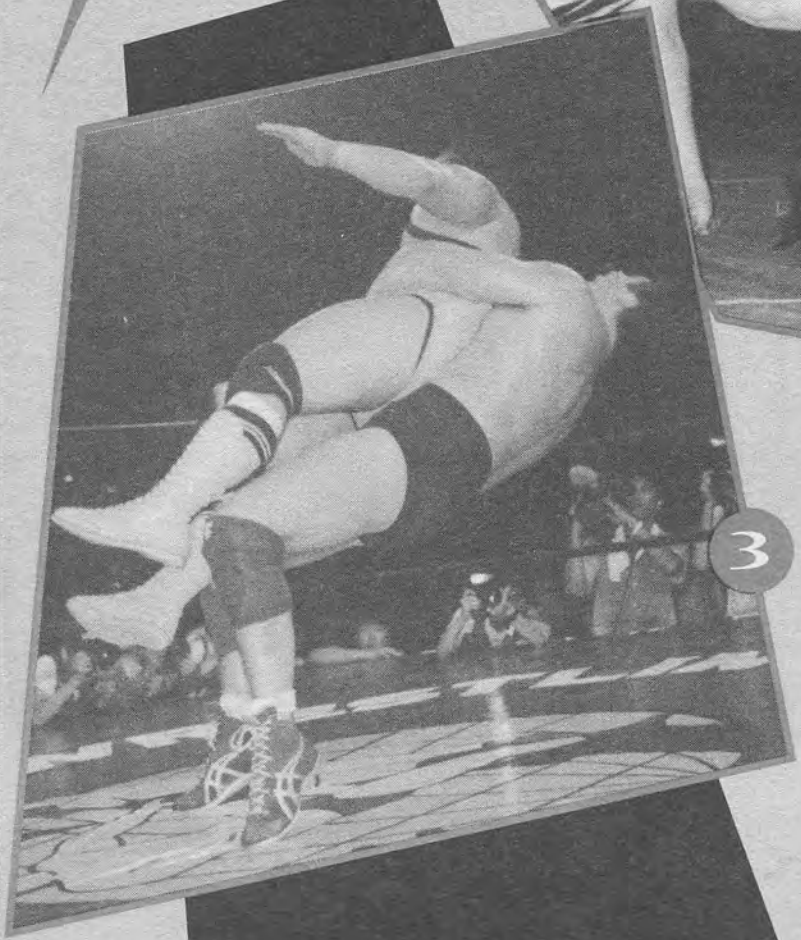
SHOCK VALUE: Dan is not shocking to look at, and there's nothing particularly shocking—or even moderately flashy—about his wrestling style. We'll give him a modest 6.3, but don't underestimate his impact on the sport thus far, or his potential to have an impact in the months and years to come. Read on ...

WRESTLING IMPACT: As a two-time UFC champion, Severn brings a rugged intensity from the octagon to the ring, and a measure of athletic respect to not only the NWA title (which so desperately needs to recapture its former respect), but to all professional wrestlers. His natural UFC tendency to work toward a submission carries over into the wrestling ring, too. Combine that with a martial artist's intensity and work ethic, and you have someone reminiscent of a wrestler from the days before Gorgeous George changed things for everyone.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Dan's accomplishments are drawing attention. His pair of UFC wins will no doubt be joined by more victories in the octagon. And there are few other men in the sport who exemplify the classic values of the NWA title. But the NWA organization isn't in a position to expand Severn's star status. A move to WWF or WCW could, though, and should Severn make the move—and retain his sporting values in the process—look for the sport to take a hard turn back toward rugged traditionalism (watch out, Goldust!).







1. Severn ducks Anthony Macias in UFC. 2. Bruiser Bedlam gets all locked up. 3. Severn's beautiful suplex thwarts Tarzan Goto in Japan. 3. That's a wrap against Osamu Nishimura.

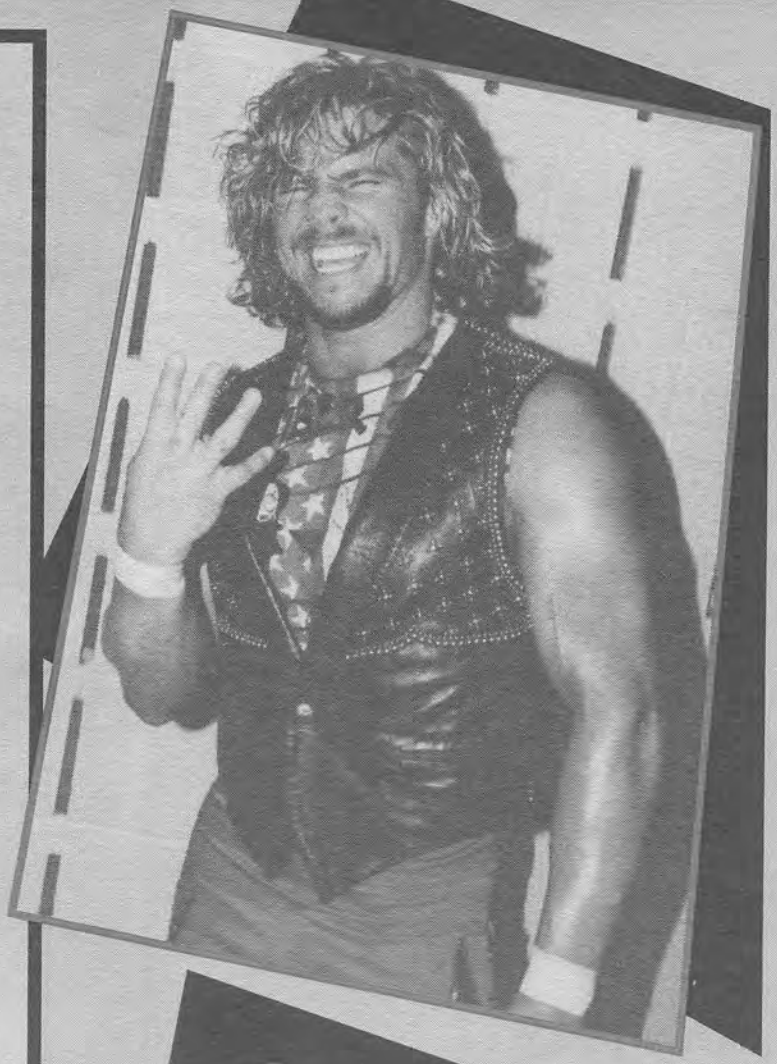
BRIAN PILLMAN

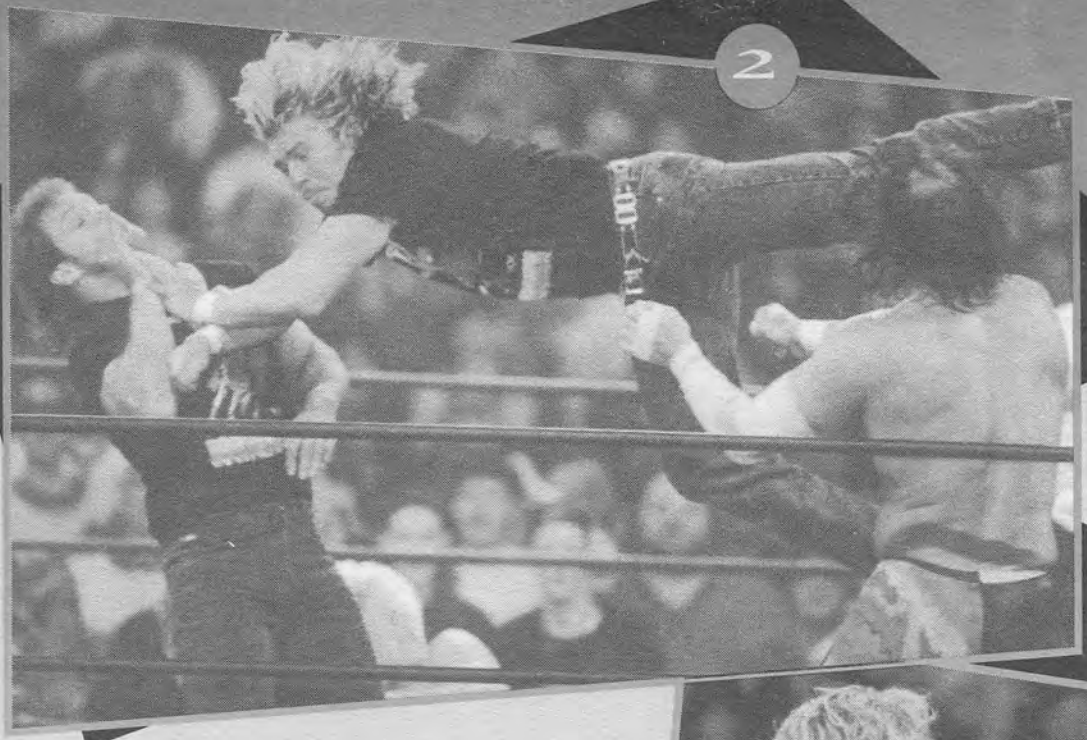
VITAL STATISTICS: Brian Pillman stands 6' and weighs 226 pounds ... A native of Cincinnati, Ohio ... Made his pro debut late in 1986 ... Currently wrestling in WCW as a member of The Four Horsemen.

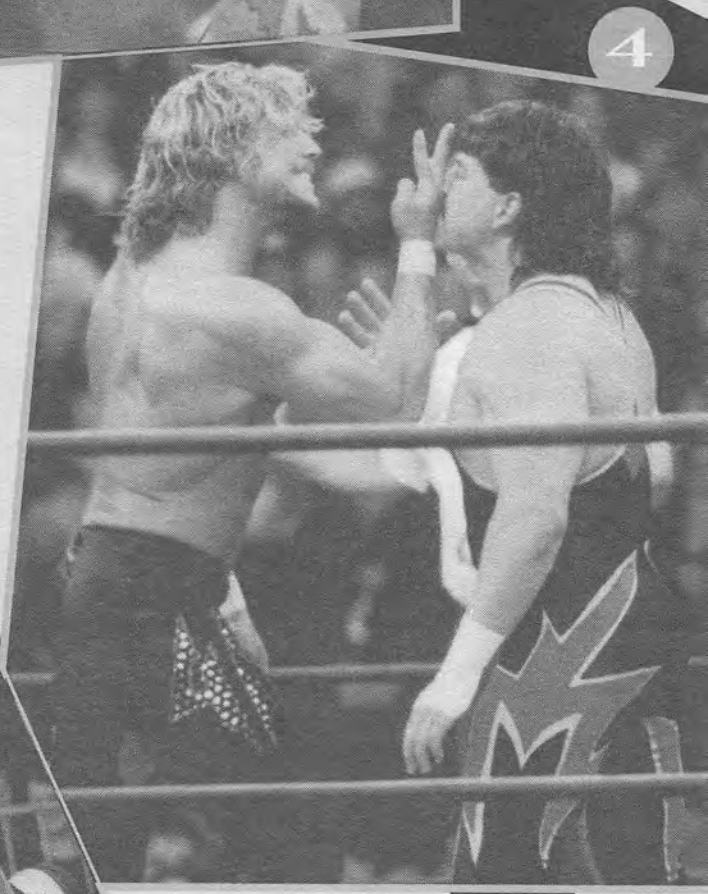
SHOCK VALUE: Make it 8.9, and remember that a chunk of that is there because you simply never know what Pillman is going to say or do next. WCW broadcasters like referring to him as "a loose cannon," and he is definitely that. But at the same time, he is also wrestling the best matches of his career. He may not be focused on interviews, but he is definitely focused inside that ring. And he has a wide-ranging offense, from complex mat wrestling to sensationally impressive aerial attacks.

WRESTLING IMPACT: There's is no questioning Pillman's pride in being a Horseman, or his intensity in attempting to carry on the Horsemen tradition. He has a tendency to act on his own, making his presence on a team a little problematic. But those are small hurdles. The main thing is that Pillman is a spectacularly talented wrestler who has been labeled a light heavyweight for too long. His antics have brought him attention from fans and matchmakers, and his career is moving ahead. Will his success inspire other cannons to loosen up?

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: If The Giant has the potential to become the Andre the Giant of the 21st century, then Pillman has the potential to become the Ric Flair of the next decade. Potential. Tighten the cannon and focus the energy, and Pillman might move from *a* Horseman to *the* Horseman.







1. Alex Wright is all tied up. 2. Pillman causes Horsemen chaos. 3. The Renegade is in trouble. 4. Four fingers in Guerrero's face.

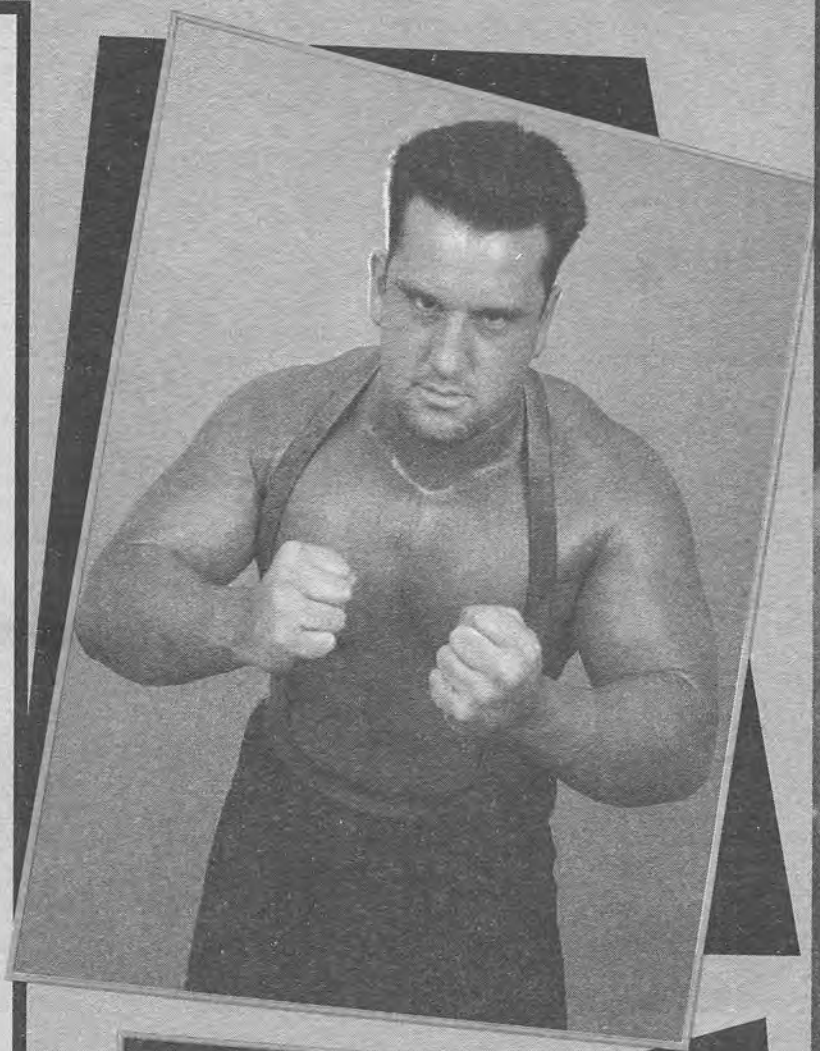
TOMMY DREAMER

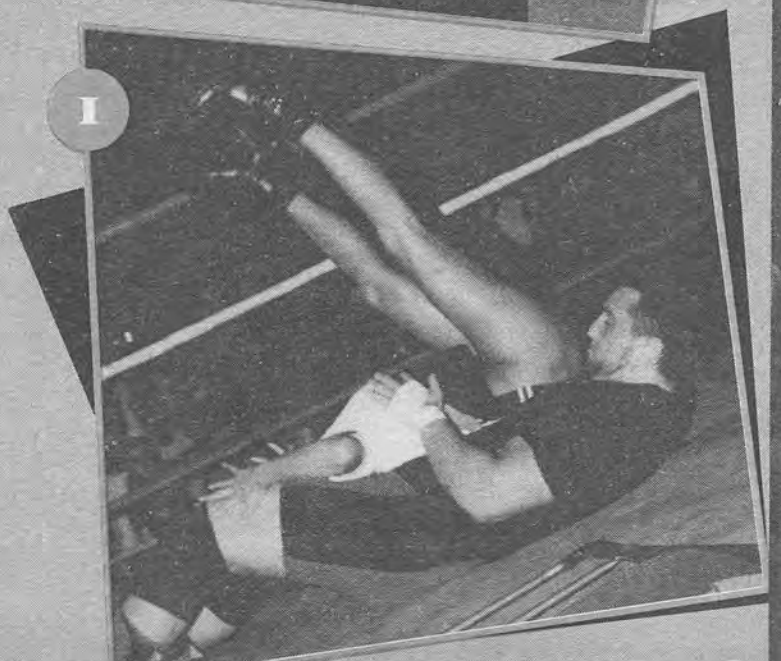
VITAL STATISTICS: Dreamer stands 6'3" and weighs in at 245 pounds ... He's from Yonkers, New York ... Has been wrestling professionally since 1989 ... Currently competing in Extreme Championship Wrestling

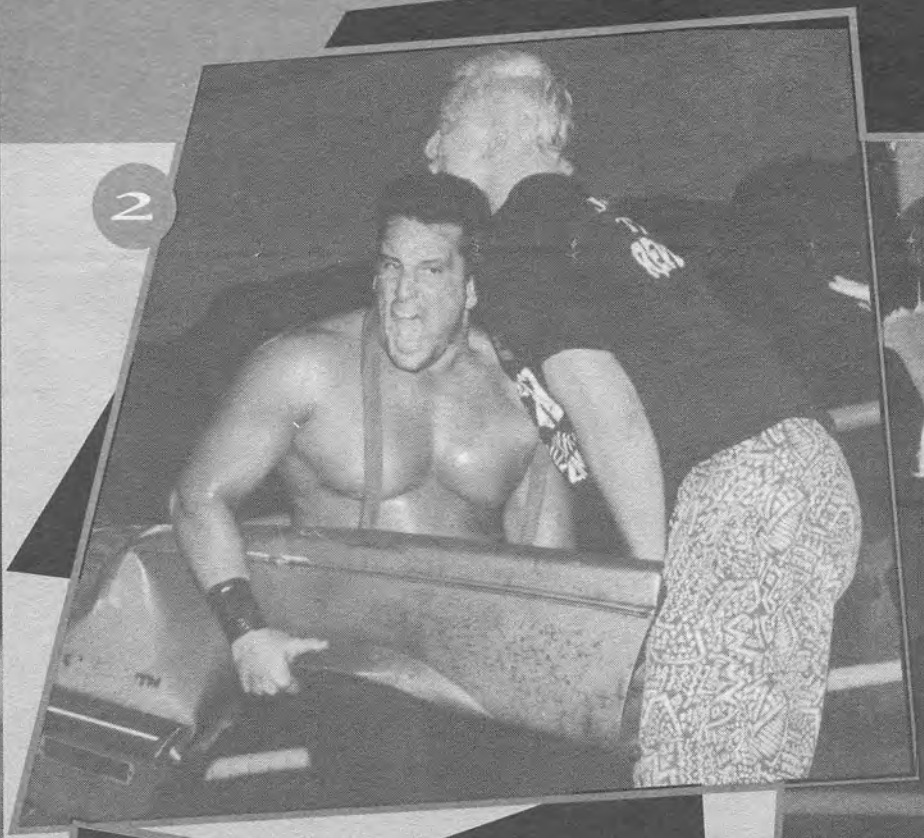
SHOCK VALUE: We'll give him a respectable 7.8. Just look at this guy! If this were 1985, Dreamer would be competing with Rick Martel and The Rock 'n' Roll Express as the number-one wrestler to set female hearts beating. But it's 1995, most female hearts aren't necessarily attuned to ECW, yet the operative word remains *beating*. If you saw this guy walking down the street, and you were anyone other than Raven, would you imagine him capable of dishing out the kind of violence that Dreamer does on a regular basis? We wouldn't, either.

WRESTLING IMPACT: Plenty. This guy fancies himself "king of the hardcores," which isn't just blowing hot air when you're slammin' it and jammin' it in the hellbent-for-blood ECW. Suddenly, it's not just Cactus Jack and Sabu who are willing to risk plasma and body parts for a three-count, much less a championship belt. Here's a guy who probably *should* be worried about messing up his good looks. He isn't, and that raises the stakes for everyone in ECW—and, the more success he enjoys, everyone throughout the entire sport.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Dreamer could become one of the real standard-bearers of the sport. Good-looking, but bad to the bone. In shape, but in a mood to maim. Takes no prisoners and takes no crap from anyone. Willing to do *anything* to succeed—and, of course, nothing succeeds like success. The more Dreamer succeeds, the more the sport will *have* to pay him attention.







1. Poor Beulah McGillicutty! 2. Dreamer gets car-ried away vs. Sandman. 3. Making creative use of a walker. 4. A messy pile-driver stuns Raven.

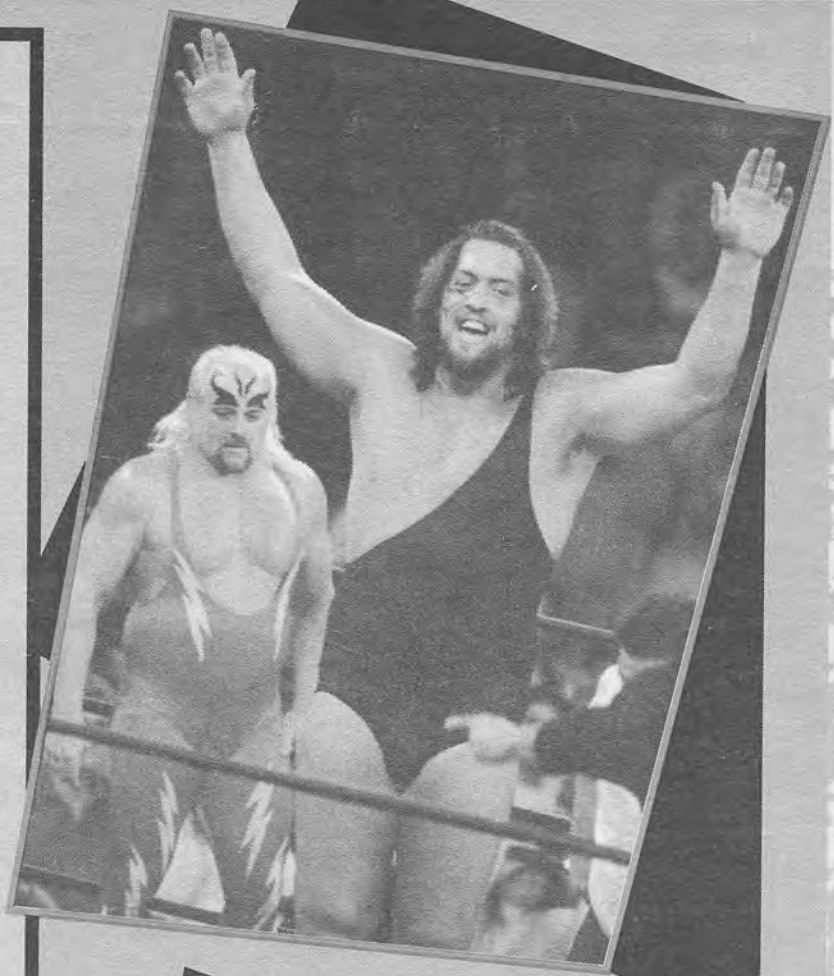
THE GIANT

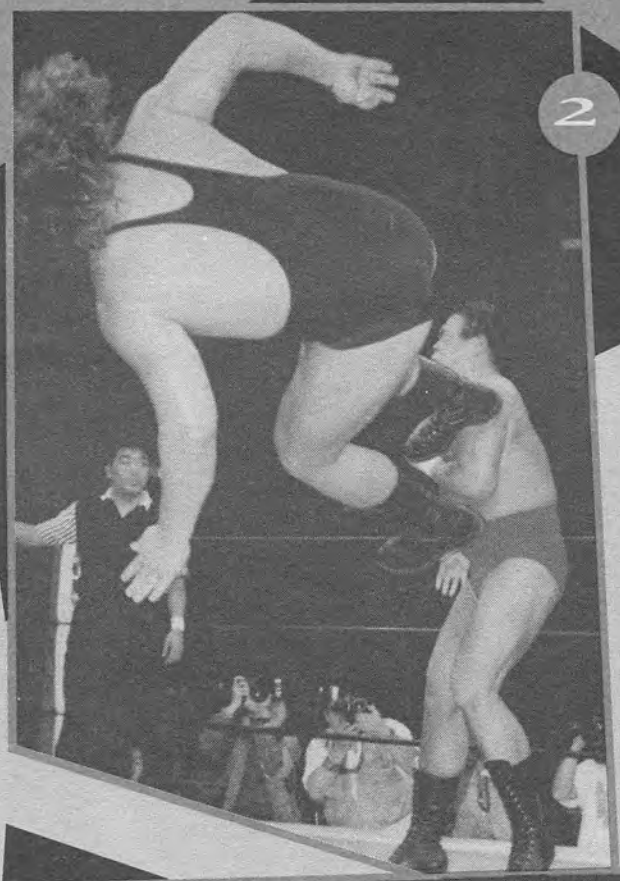
VITAL STATISTICS: This kingpin of the dastardly Dungeon of Doom stands 7'4" ... The scales groan at this behemoth's 430 pounds ... He's slammin' 'em down in WCW, where he made his pro debut in 1995.

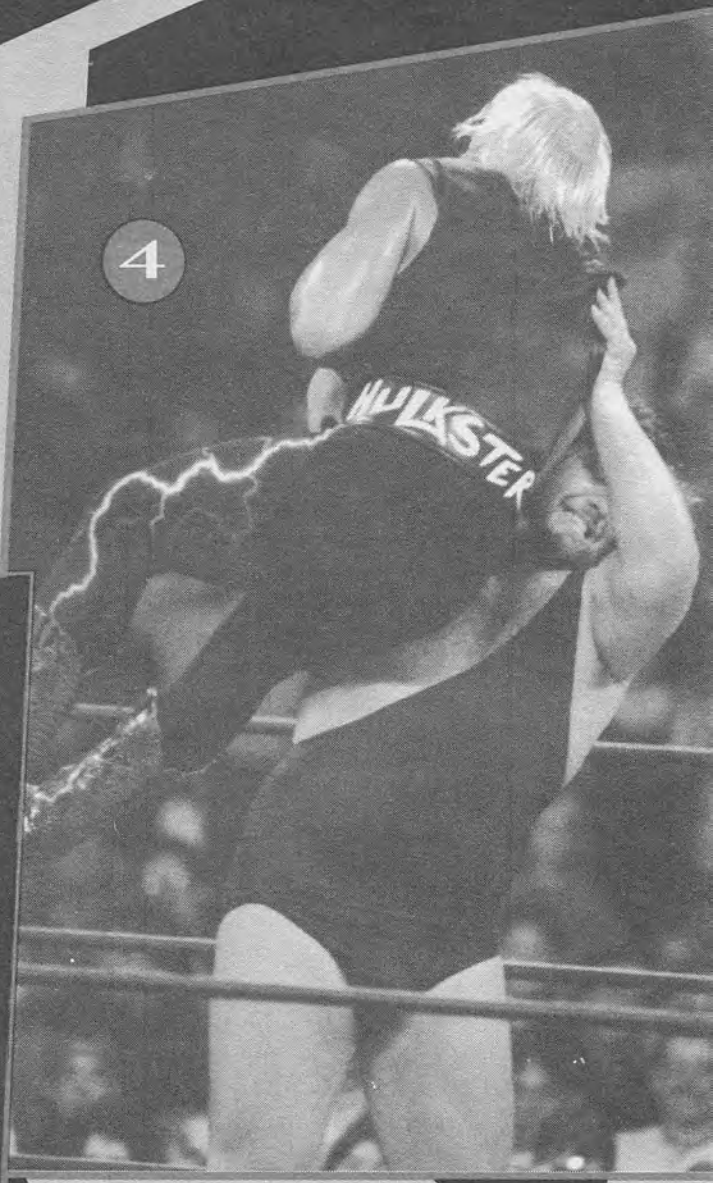
SHOCK VALUE: A significant 8.6: Given the fact that most of the giants in the sport have shown ring skills and mobility that makes them stiffer than anything in the lumber aisle of Home Depot, this Giant's athleticism is a stunner. Compared to Giant Gonzales and Big John Harris, WCW's mashing monster looks like Eddy Guerrero!

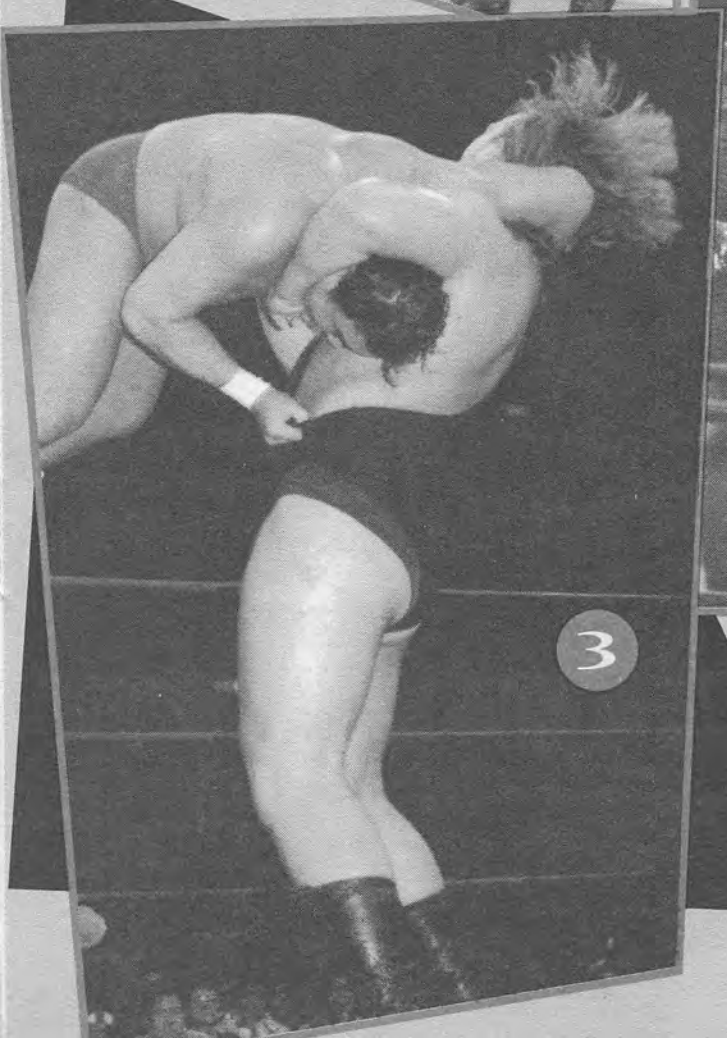
WRESTLING IMPACT: He hasn't completed his rookie year yet, but he already has Hulk Hogan quaking in his boots and Randy Savage using women to distract the big man so he can pull a sneaky run-in from behind and clamp on the sleeperhold. Make no mistake about it: Every competitor in WCW knows that this big guy is good—and getting better. He's hanging with talented and experienced (albeit evil) men, and has a willingness to travel halfway around the globe to pick up some of the finer points of the sport in Japan.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: The Giant has a one-point agenda: become the greatest big man the sport has ever known. The tools are all there. He has the size, the strength, and, most important, the determination. Give him a couple of years of experience, a repertoire of maneuvers that best take advantage of his size, and he could even *surpass* Andre the Giant's legacy. Where Andre was a special attraction who won only one world title—and by deceit, no less—this WCW Giant could enter the next century with a hammerlock on any championship gold he desires.









1. Getting a Giant grip on Hugh Morris. 2. A 7'4" monster throwing a dropkick?! 3. What height The Giant gets on his vertical suplex! 4. The "Hulkster" goes up and down.

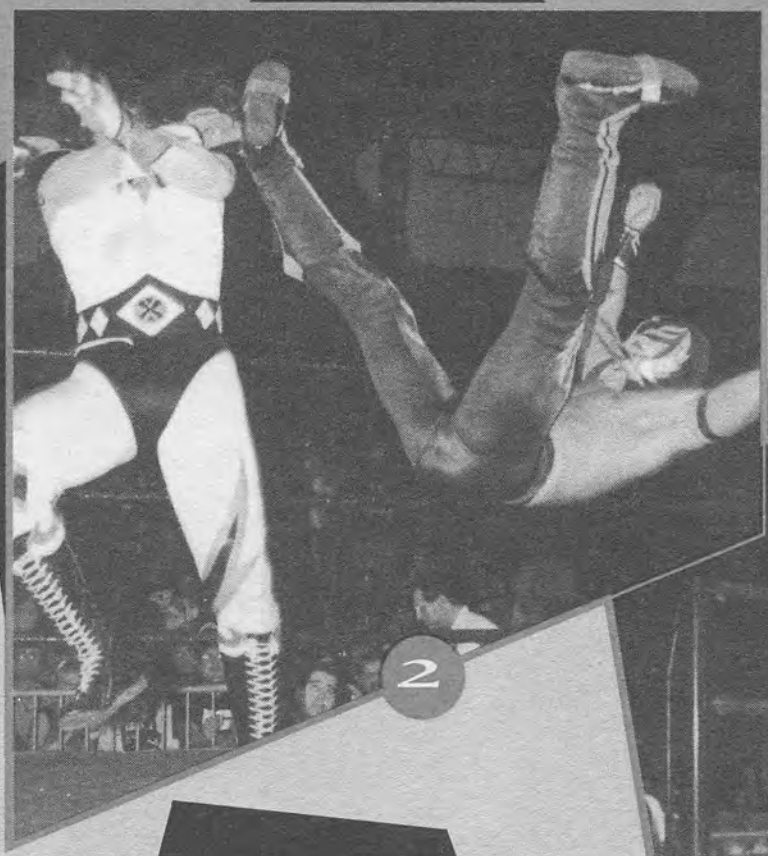
REY MISTERIO JR.

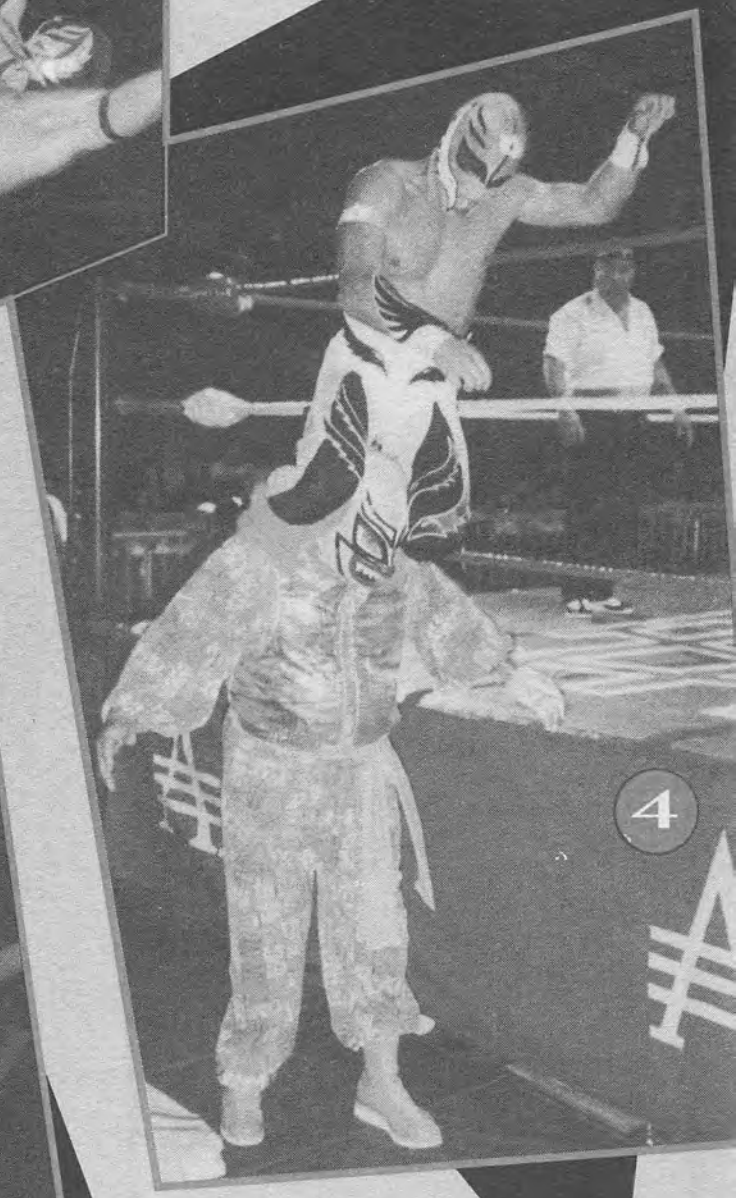
VITAL STATISTICS: Of the more than 500 wrestlers listed in the statistical section of the 1996 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Almanac*, Misterio is the shortest of them all at 5'3" ... There's only 140 pounds on that frame ... A native of San Diego, California ... Currently competing in AAA and ECW.

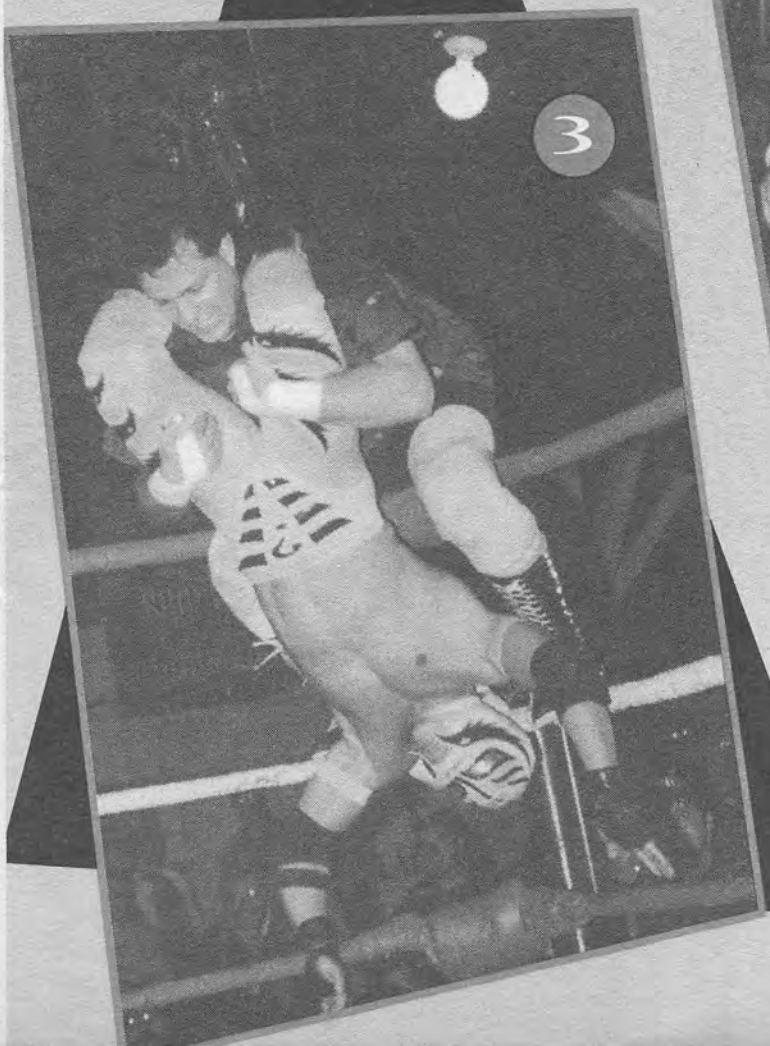
SHOCK VALUE: As high as he is diminutive: We peg it at 9.3! Because if you ever saw this guy walking down the street, you'd never imagine that a 140-pounder could hold his own—and, in most cases, overwhelm—foes that are 100 or more pounds heavier! (Charles Atlas would love him!) And if you ever saw this guy competing in the ring, you'd never forget the incredible array of ultra-gymnastic high-risk maneuvers he uses.

WRESTLING IMPACT: Remember how Tiger Mask and The Dynamite Kid energized lightweight aerial wrestling in the '80s? Well, Misterio is doing the same thing in the '90s, except he's making those speedy high-flyers look like they had lead weights packed into their boots! His moves can't be described in just a few words; and anyway, you have to quite literally see him to believe him. But once you do, you still won't believe your eyes!

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: It all depends on the willingness of promoters to display *wrestling* without worrying about the pigeonholes of weight divisions. As is the case in boxing, wrestling promoters and fans love to watch the heavier competitors battle it out. But all you need is one look at Misterio to appreciate an entirely new world of wrestling. Look for his popularity and influence to expand as the word on this awesome star spreads.







1. A "Frankensteiner" on the floor?! 2. A kick that rocks Psicosis. 3. This "Frankensteiner" is from the top rope. 4. Misterio's not just going for a ride.

THE ROTTENS

VITAL STATISTICS: At 6'2", Axl stands two inches taller than his brother, Ian ... He's a bit heavier, too: 302 pounds to Ian's 281 ... Both were raised in England ... Axl broke into the sport in 1988, two years earlier than his brother ... Axl is wrestling in ECW, while Ian is competing in a variety of smaller independent organizations.

SHOCK VALUE: Talk about brothers in blood! Barbed-wire baseball bat matches! Matches in which the ringside area was littered with thumbtacks! A "taipei death" match, in which both men had shards of broken glass glued to their taped fists! We'll award them a 9.2, but maybe we should add an extra tenth of a point or two just for sadistic creativity!

WRESTLING IMPACT: If you read the article on wrestling around the world that was printed in the 1996 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Almanac*, you learned about "garbage" promotions in Japan, organizations such as the IWA, where broken-glass bouts and bed-of-nails matches are the sickening norm. The Rottens brought garbage wrestling to the ECW Arena, and the bloodthirsty fans drank it up. So did enough fans who saw the Rottens on TV and read about their matches in the press: Axl vs. Ian was voted 1995's *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Feud of the Year.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Once you open the door to such wrestling extremes, it's almost impossible to shut it again. Give the Rottens credit for upping the violence ante ... and hope they don't get back together, or else the ante will be upped again ... and again ... and ...

1. Ian gives Axl that glassy-eyed look. 2. Ian steps up to bat. 3. What a choker that Axl is! 4. Ian bags another opponent.

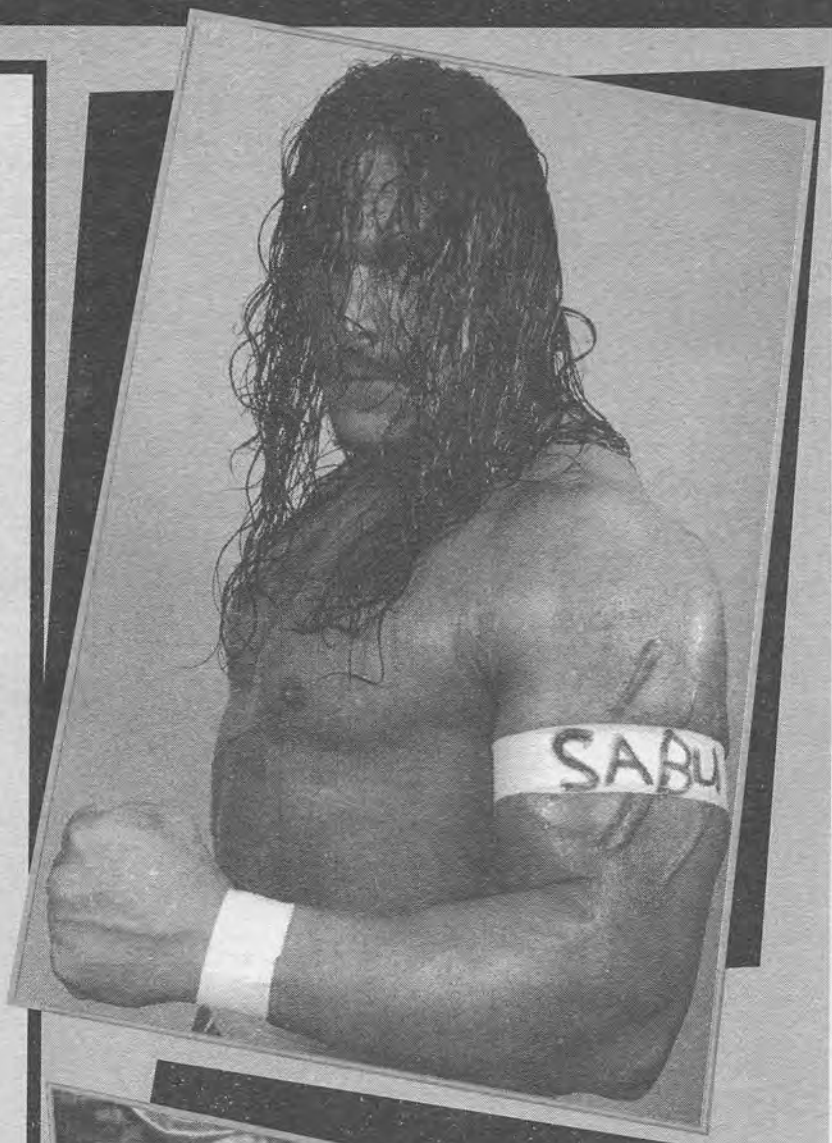
SABU

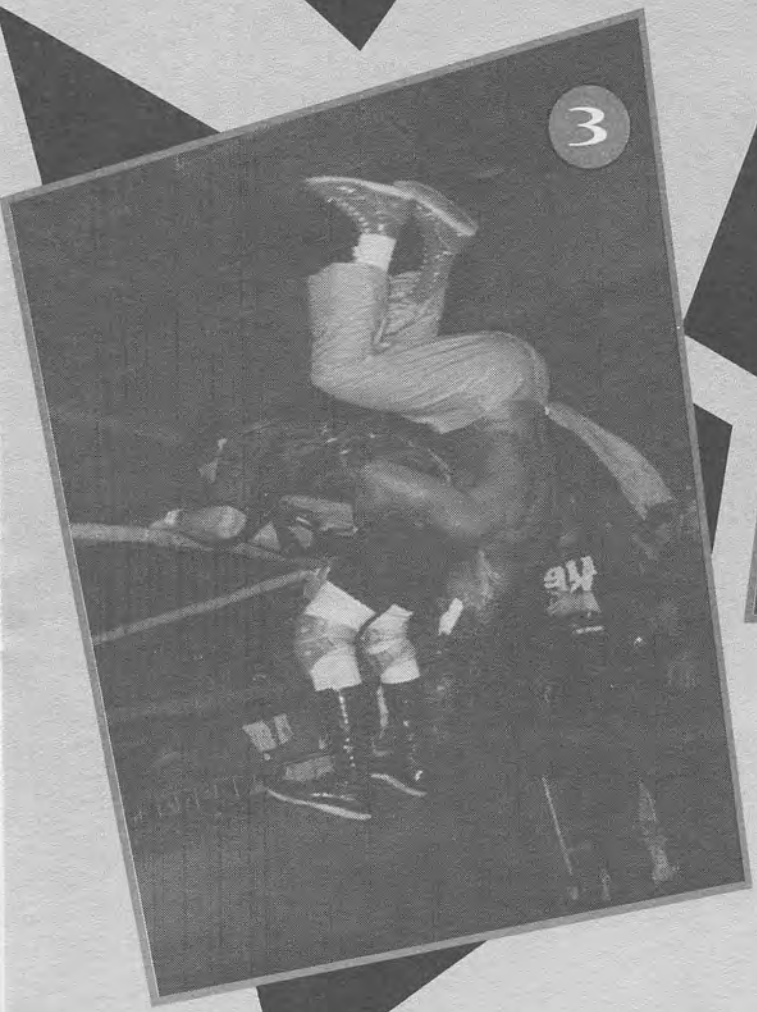
VITAL STATISTICS: This reckless aerial artist stands 6' and weighs 220 pounds ... A protege of The Sheik, Sabu calls Bombay, India, his home ... He has been a pro since 1985 ... Currently wrestling in ECW following a brief stint in WCW.

SHOCK VALUE: Two years ago, we would have given him at least a 9. Today, call it 7.4: Fans and opponents know that broken tables—and the occasional broken bone—are as much a part of a Sabu match as the legdrop is a part of a Hulk Hogan match. Still, there's a willingness in Sabu not only to break his own bones and tear his own flesh for the sake of a win, but to explore and expand the ways he can do so. In regular wrestling terms, it's called expanding the repertoire; in the case of Sabu, it probably should be called insane.

WRESTLING IMPACT: WCW had opened its doors to Sabu, but he refused to walk through. Preferring to maintain his independence among the independents, Sabu wrestled a few matches on *Monday Nitro*, then returned to the ECW Arena, which serves as home base when he isn't wrestling in other independents or in Japan. Imagine the impact on the sport had Sabu and Public Enemy all captured WCW titles! Still, Sabu is to the independent scene what Shawn Michaels is to the WWF and Sting is to WCW: a franchise player. In this case, though, he's a player whose only franchise is himself—and his penchant for violence.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: If he doesn't cripple or kill himself first, Sabu will continue to be a franchise player. But expect his influence to continue to be felt years after he is sidelined.





1. Sabu and Rob Van Dam join the crowd. 2. A victory celebration—Sabu style! 3. An extraordinary sunset flip. 4. Sabu tables Stevie Richards.

SHAWN MICHAELS

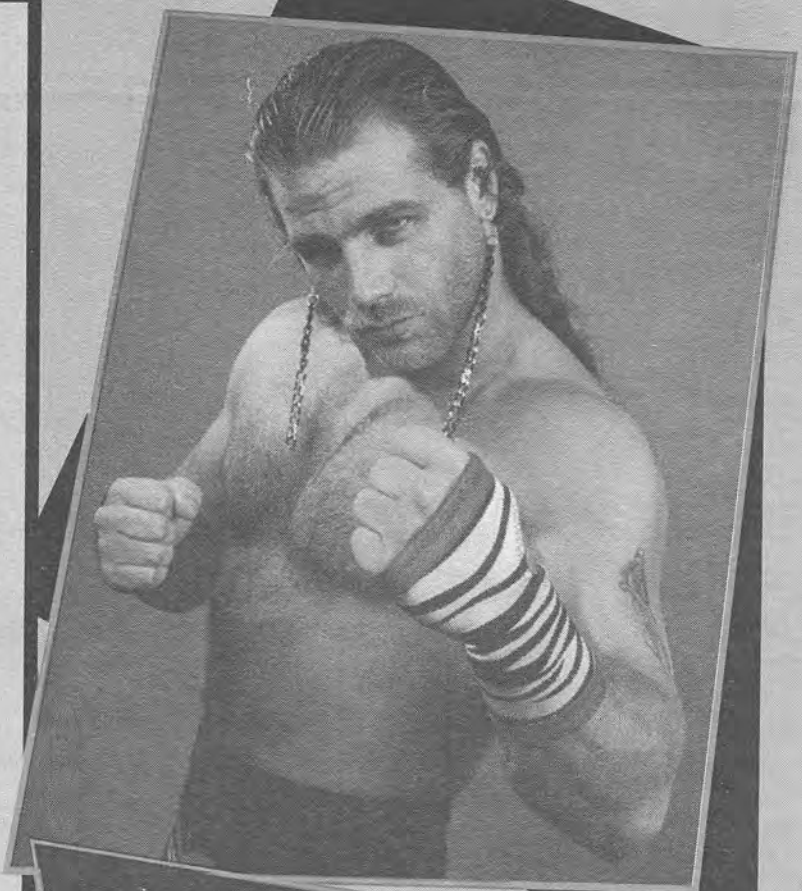
VITAL STATISTICS: "The Heartbreak Kid" stands 6' and weighs 234 pounds ... This former Midnight Rocker hails from San Antonio, Texas ... Made his pro debut in 1983 ... If you don't know that he's wrestling in the WWF, what are you doing buying this magazine?

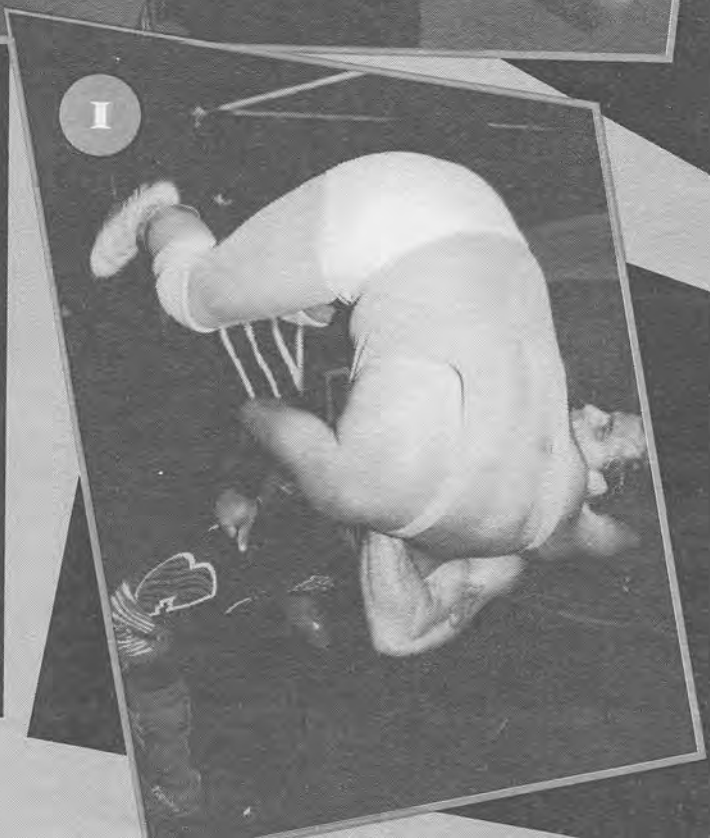
SHOCK VALUE: The biggest shock about Michaels isn't that he wrestled like *that* in the ladder matches against Razor Ramon (though they *were* something, weren't they?!), it's that he managed to come back to action so soon after collapsing in the ring—and won the 1996 Royal Rumble to boot! For that, we'll give him an 8.1, with a good chunk of that value being added for the fact that he probably ignored the advice of several doctors—and maybe even his own better judgment—by returning to the ring.

WRESTLING IMPACT: His appeal cuts across all boundaries: Females love this "sexy boy," while males admire his skills and tenacity. And how many wrestling fans can deny that he's among the most talented athletes of all-time? Had Diesel not scored such a mother lode of championship gold last year, Michaels would undoubtedly have been number one and not number two in the 1995 "*PWI* 500." He has charisma to match his skills and sex appeal. But the bottom line: This guy knows how to wrestle. And that's his message to the sport: Be as flashy as you want, but when that bell rings, you had better know what you're doing.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Michaels needs those funky little shades of his, because his future is *that* bright ... unless we all learn that his collapse in the ring was more serious than anyone first thought. Be careful, Shawn.

(Continued on page 47)



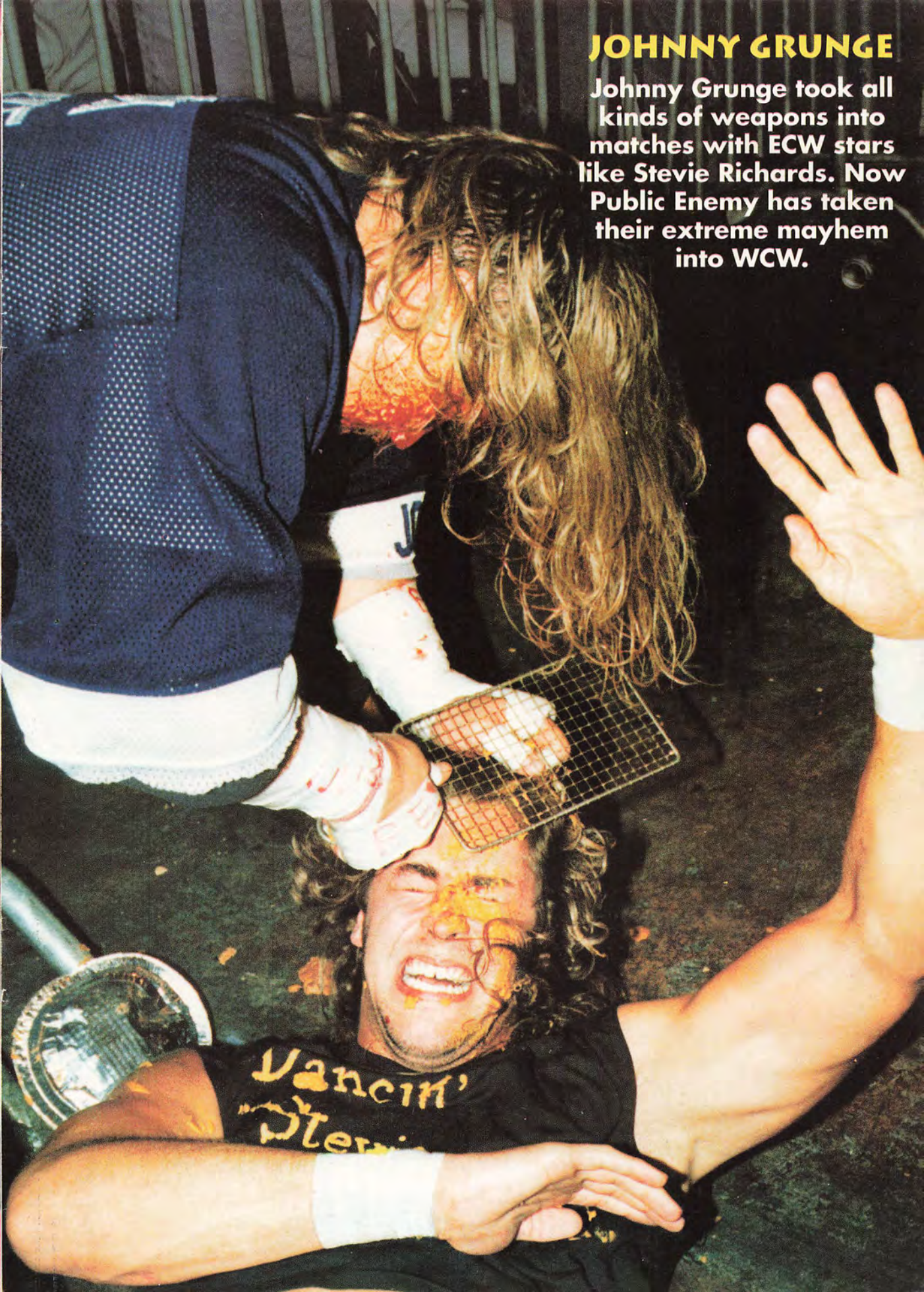


DAN SEVERN

Sure, Dan's an NWA champion in the mold of classic wrestlers of many decades ago, but he sure knows how to brawl, too! Just ask Bruiser Bedlam!

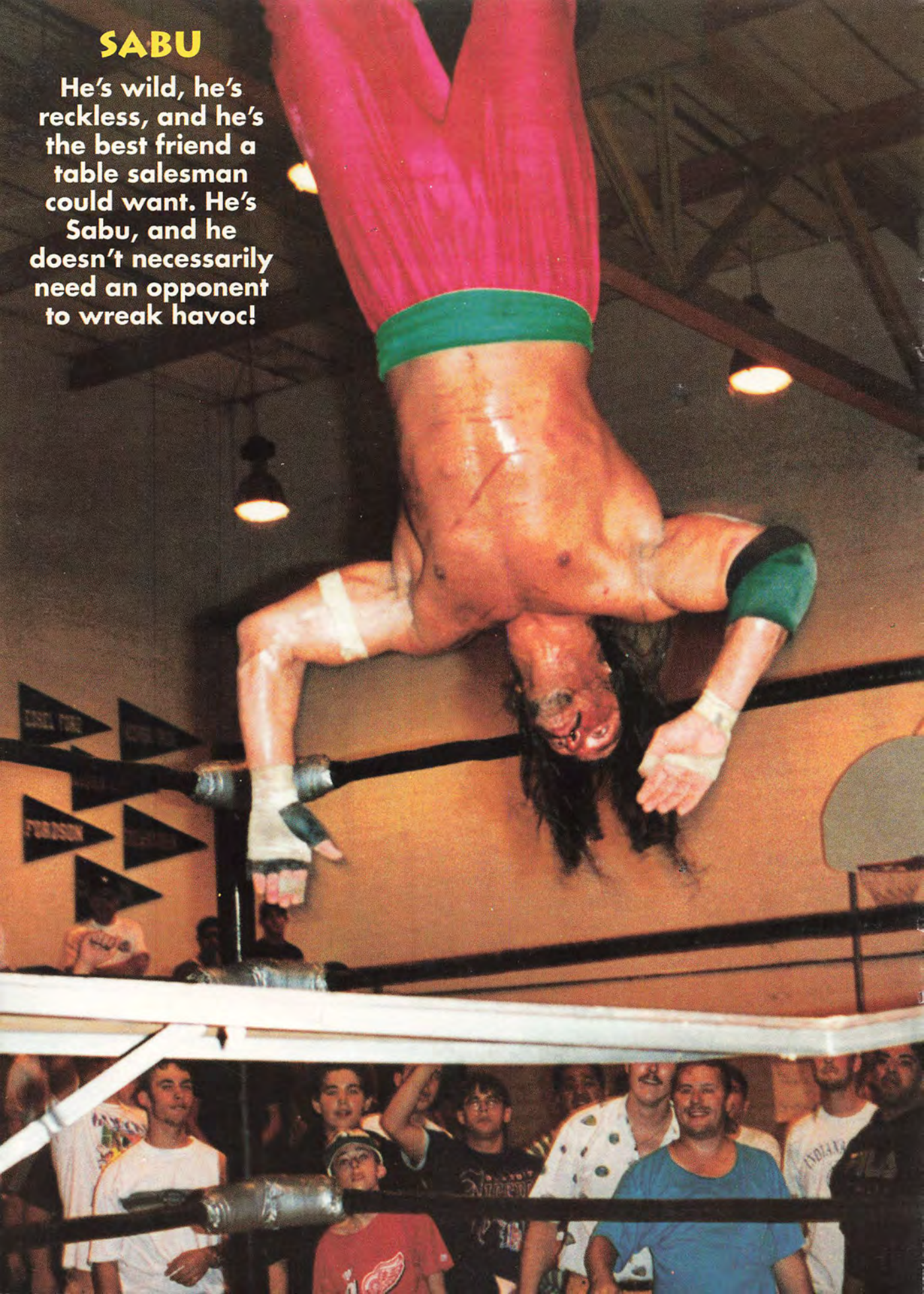
THE GIANT

Is The Giant talented enough to inherit the mantle of excellence from Andre the Giant? Well, did you ever see Andre get this high on an elbowsmash?



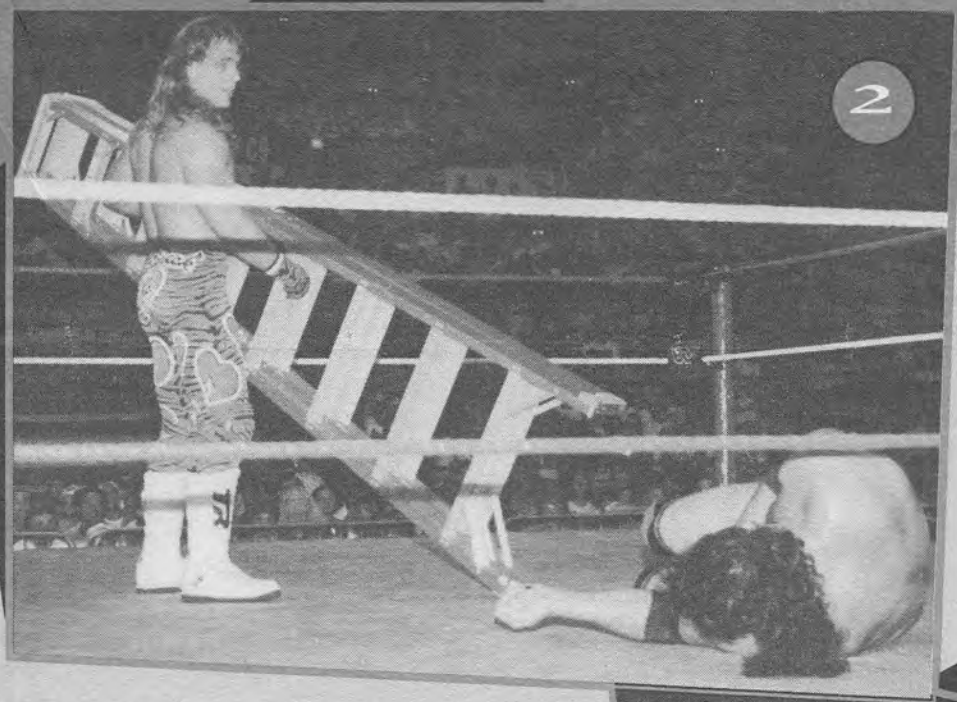
JOHNNY GRUNGE

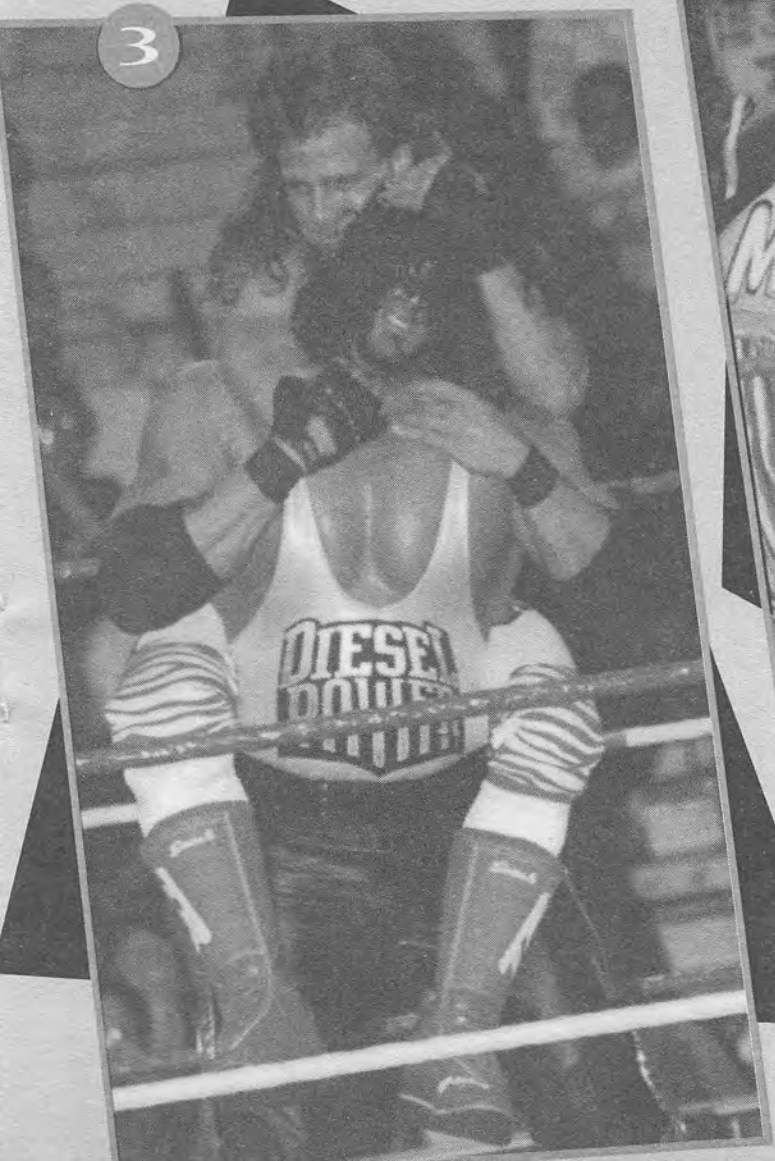
Johnny Grunge took all kinds of weapons into matches with ECW stars like Stevie Richards. Now Public Enemy has taken their extreme mayhem into WCW.



SABU

He's wild, he's reckless, and he's the best friend a table salesman could want. He's Sabu, and he doesn't necessarily need an opponent to wreak havoc!





1. Just another outside-the-ring suplex. 2. Shawn's dangerous with a ladder. 3. An interesting way of applying a sleeper. 4. Giving big Mabel a push.

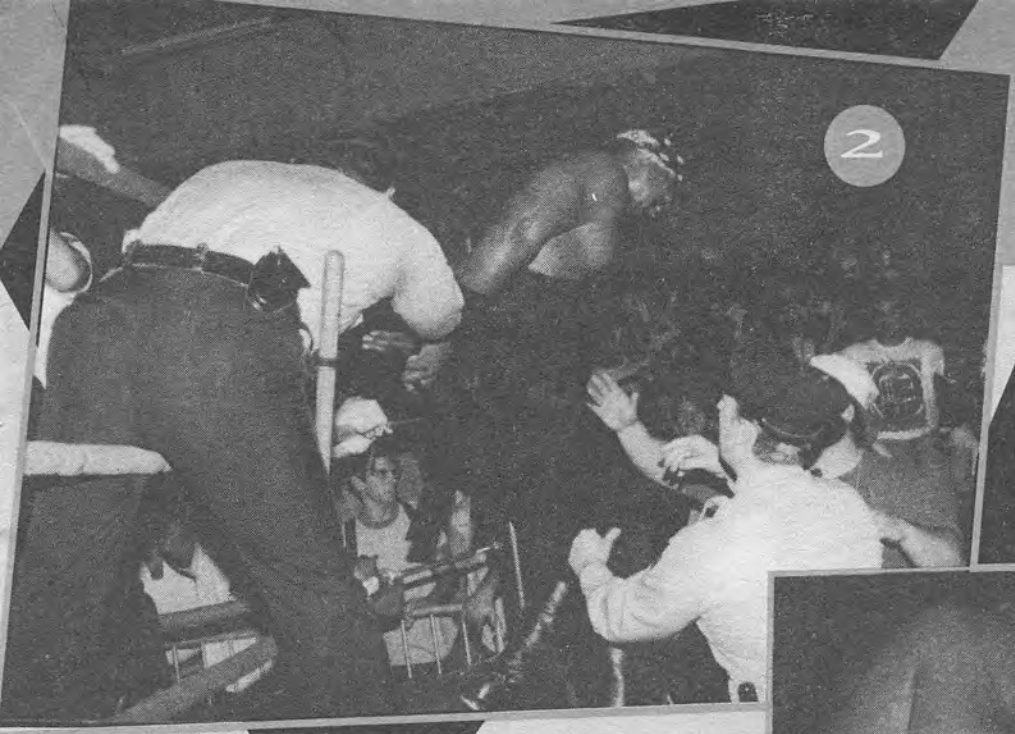
THE GANGSTAS

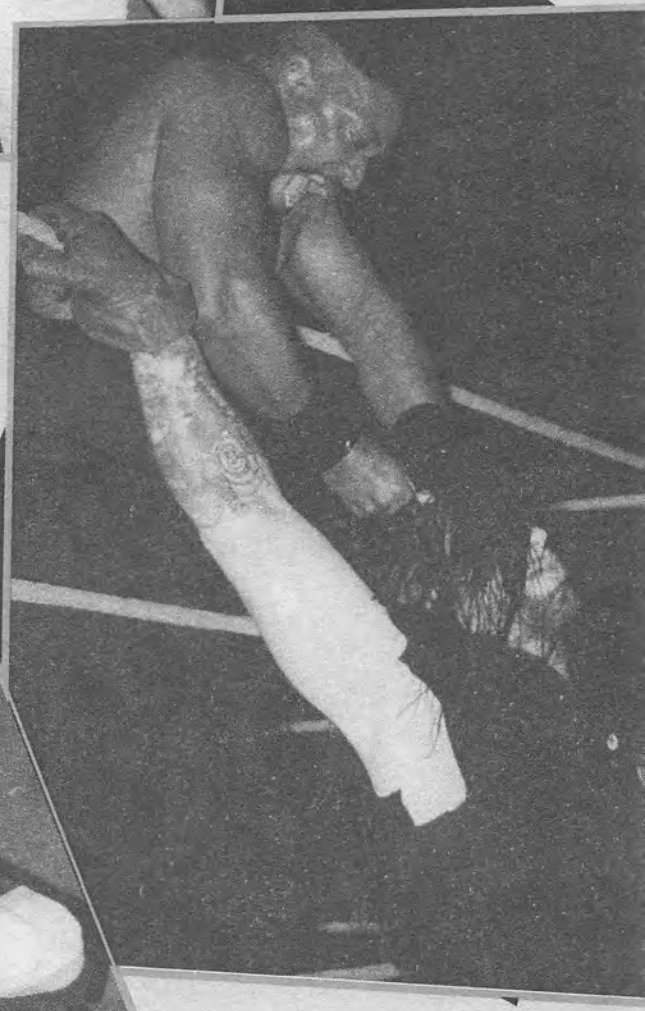
VITAL STATISTICS: Mustafa Saed, at 6'1", stands an inch taller than his Gangsta teammate, New Jack ... Jack weighs in at 225 pounds; Saed weighs in at 244 ... 1992 was the year these brutal brawlers from Atlanta first hit the sport ... Currently competing in ECW.

SHOCK VALUE: We'll make it a 7.8, in large part for the fact that The Gangstas espouse racism, and use that loathsome philosophy as fuel to energize themselves and infuriate their opponents and the fans. Maybe you'd expect their shock value to be higher, but we live in racist times, unfortunately, and The Gangstas are, sadly, not a unique part of the current American landscape.

WRESTLING IMPACT: Saed and Jack are a couple of street-smart brawlers with attitude—*bad* attitude. It's that attitude that gives them their edgy quality, making them attractive to an edgy promotion like *Extreme* Championship Wrestling. But it's that attitude that will limit their success. Does anyone honestly expect WCW or the WWF to take a chance with Saed and Jack? Then again, did anyone expect WWF broadcasters to be discussing homophobia during Dustin, er, Goldust's matches? If The Gangstas keep making an impact in the high-impact ECW, the sport itself may be forced to acknowledge them a lot more than it wants to.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: Do Jack and Saed have the willingness to tone down their rhetoric in order to advance their careers? Forget it. If their careers advance, it will be through a parade of broken bones and bleeding bodies, not a kinder, gentler brand of racism.





1. Jack digs in against Johnny Grunge. 2. The cops just love The Gangstas! 3. Now that's a piledriver, New Jack! 4. Mustafa isn't afraid of The Undertaker.

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN

VITAL STATISTICS: The All-Japan Women's organization has been in existence since 1968 ... Top stars include Minami Toyota, Dynamite Kansai, Takako Inoue, Bull Nakano, Aja Kong, and Reggie Bennett.

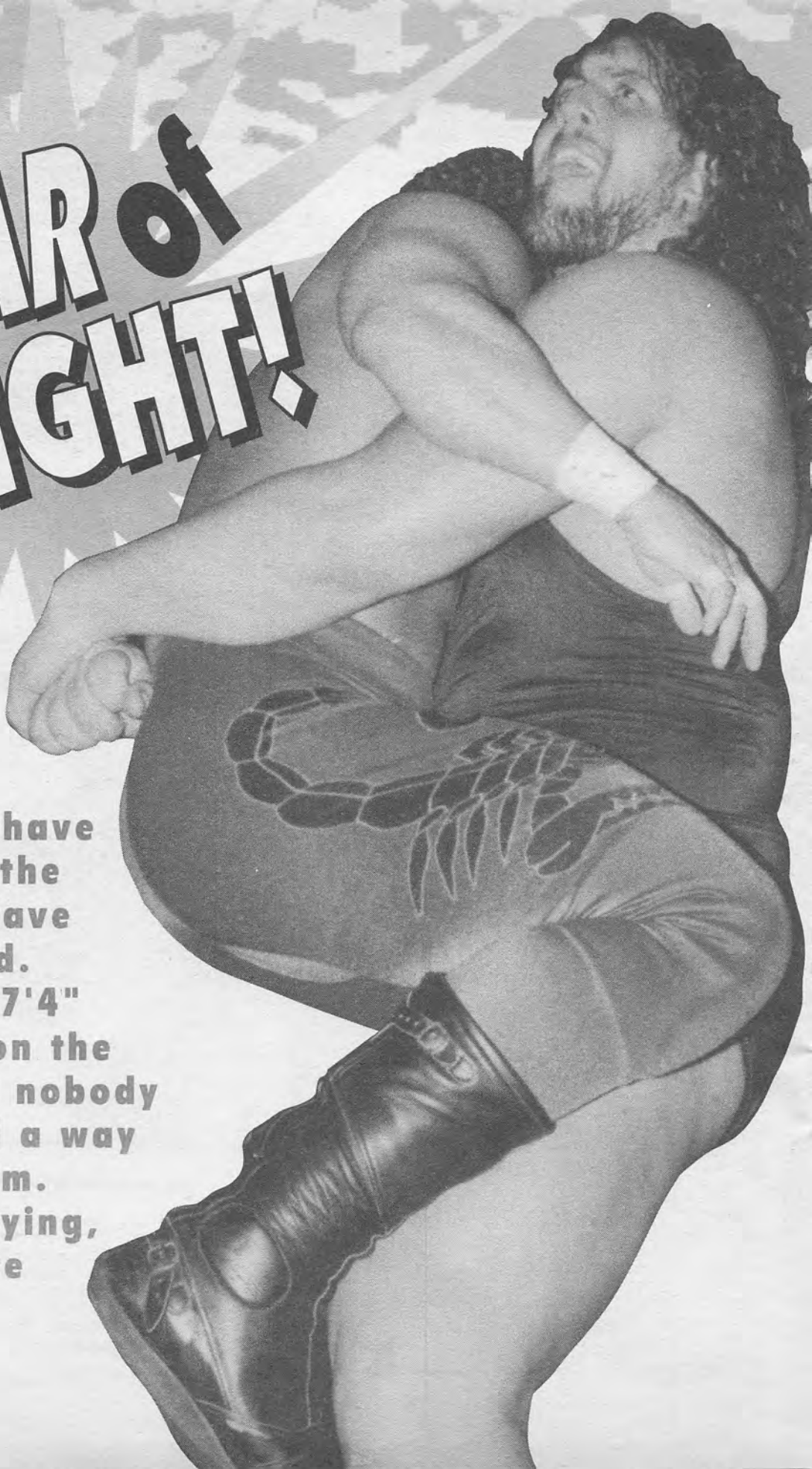
SHOCK VALUE: A solid 8.5: If you saw the WWF's Survivor Series '95, where Bertha Faye, Aja Kong, Tomoko Watanabe, and Lioness Asuka defeated Alundra Blayze, Sakie Hasegawa, Kyoko Inoue, and Chapparita Asari, or purchased the WCW-sponsored Collision In Korea pay-per-view last August that saw Bull Nakano and Akira Hokuto beat Minami Toyota and Mariko Yoshida, you saw some of the All-Japan Women in action. Who would have thought that some of the best wrestling of the year on American television wouldn't even involve Shawn Michaels, Bret Hart, Chris Benoit, or Ric Flair?

WRESTLING IMPACT: In Japan? Huge. On November 20, 1994, the All-Japan Women drew a crowd of 42,500 to the Tokyo Dome! When was the last time *any* wrestling drew that big a crowd in the States? There's no question that promoters everywhere are looking at the success of the All-Japan Women and reconsidering their positions on the state of women's wrestling today.

THROUGH THE '90s—AND BEYOND: It all depends on the promoters. Are they willing to open their minds and checkbooks to a little-known (in the U.S., anyway) style of wrestling? Can Minami Toyota be to the '90s what Wendi Richter was to the '80s? The Big Two—WWF and WCW—have fumbled the light heavyweight ball more times than that worthy division needs to be reminded, so who knows *what* they'll do with All-Japan Women. Stay tuned.

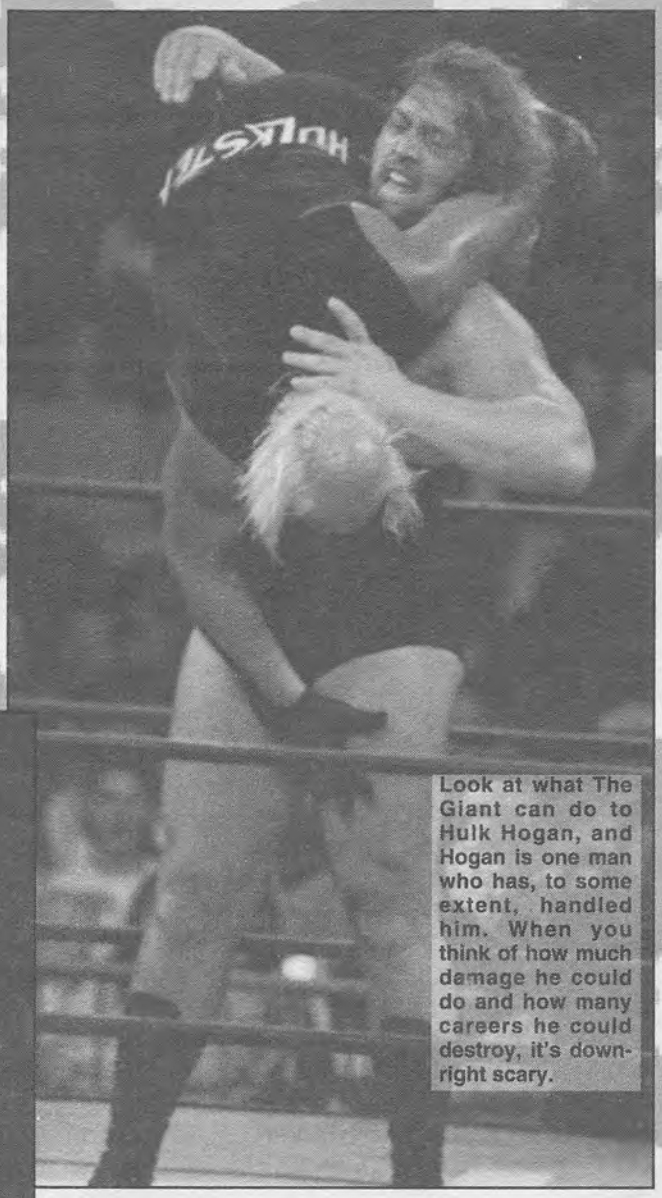
1. Aja Kong takes a dive at Kyoko Inoue. 2. Lioness Asuka roars into a brainbuster against Mima Shimoda. 3. Chapparita Asari's German suplex. 4. Dynamite Kansai's "splash mountain" power bomb will rock Minami Toyota. 5. Takako Inoue drops in with a knee on Reggie Bennett.

FEAR of HEIGHT!

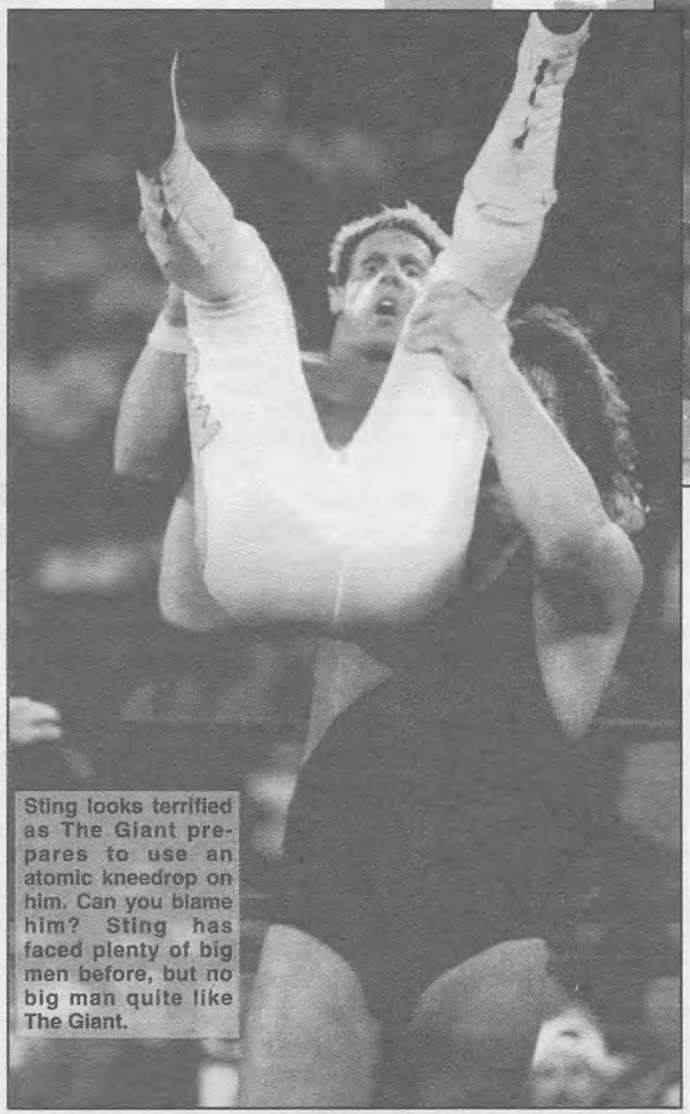


The rules have changed, the dangers have intensified. There's a 7'4" madman on the loose and nobody has found a way to stop him. They're trying, but they're failing!

How The Giant Is Paralyzing Wrestling!



Look at what The Giant can do to Hulk Hogan, and Hogan is one man who has, to some extent, handled him. When you think of how much damage he could do and how many careers he could destroy, it's downright scary.

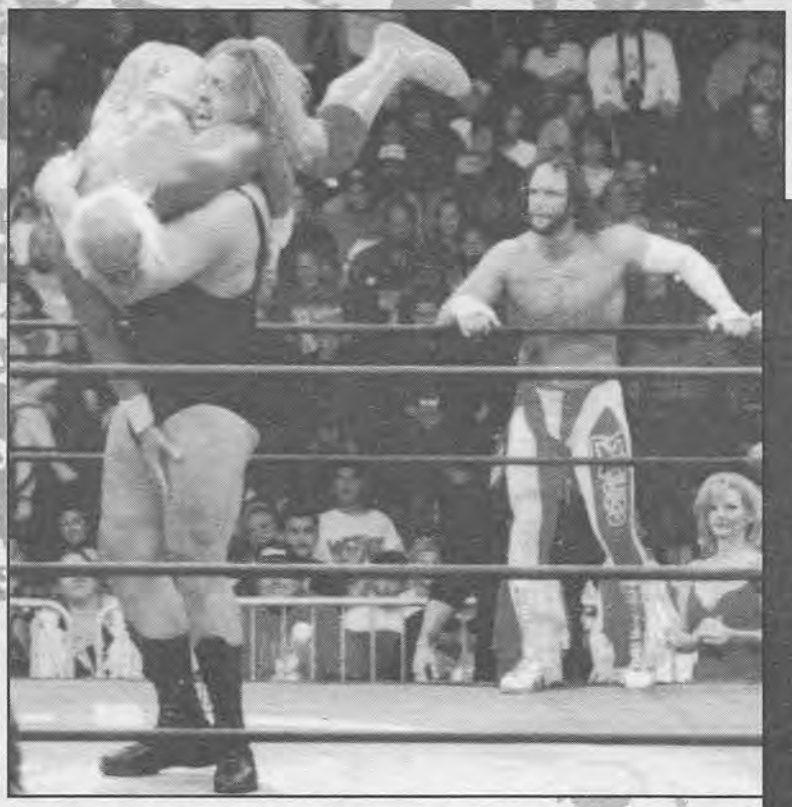


Sting looks terrified as The Giant prepares to use an atomic kneedrop on him. Can you blame him? Sting has faced plenty of big men before, but no big man quite like The Giant.

By Dave Rosenbaum

IT GOES WITHOUT saying: When a man is 7'4" tall, weighs 435 pounds, and has a temper, he's bound to create some problems. When you call yourself The Giant, you can't act small.

Hulk Hogan has seen it, known it, felt it. The "Hulkster" was The Giant's primary target from the time the monster arrived in WCW last summer, and the bigger man hit the mark. Thanks to The Giant, Hogan wakes up every morning with an irritating pinch in his neck, and when he goes to his closet to pick out a belt, the WCW World heavyweight title strap isn't one from which he can choose.



Giant gave both Hogan and Randy Savage fits at Clash of the Champions in January. Neither man has any brilliant idea about what to do to put an end to this man's reign of terror in WCW.

Johnny B. Badd is a fast, versatile wrestler, but he ran into big problems recently against The Giant. After all, he is 200 pounds lighter than him. He just couldn't knock him off his feet.

"Let me tell you something, brother, The Giant is a force to be reckoned with," Hogan said. "I dealt with him and proved that the bigger they come, the harder they fall, but I can understand why some people might be a little nervous about him. He reminds me of Andre, but with more of a killer instinct. If Andre had his killer instinct, he would have been champion 10 times."

Andre the Giant was a friendly giant until late in his career, when he realized he needed to change his ways if he was going to win a major title. He finally found his killer instinct, won the WWF World title, then sold it to Ted DiBiase. Some say he died a bitter man. The Giant is wasting no time and making no friends, other than his pals in the Dungeon of Doom. But it's easy to see The Giant wouldn't have any use for them, either, if they got in his way.

It's this attitude—a terrifying killer instinct combined with incredible size and an "I mean business" glare—that has not only intimidated *WCW* wrestlers, but wrestlers around the world. It's as if The Giant is walking around with a "Keep Away" sign hanging around his neck, and anyone who sees him quickly crosses to the other side of the street.

According to our sources, WCW officials have very mixed feelings about having The Giant in their federation. While they like the idea of having a potential superstar on their cards, they are not comfortable with the notion that this man can quickly end the careers of *other* superstars. There is also a possibility that The Giant, who hasn't yet completed his second full year as a pro, could become too good to maintain a competitive balance.

"It's a serious problem," our source said. "The concern is that The Giant can potentially reach a level never before achieved in this sport. It would be like a pitcher coming along who throws 150 mph, while nobody else can reach over 100. Nobody will be able to touch the guy throwing 150. If, say, five years from now The Giant wins the World title and is so good that nobody can give him a decent match, how much interest will there be in the title?"

In truth, The Giant is a unique individual in that he is not content to get along on just his size. He constantly works to improve his agility and he has stated that he would like to visit Japan as often as possible to expand his repertoire.

Several WCW fan favorites have been suspected of forming a coalition to drive The Giant out of town. Hogan disavowed any knowledge of this coalition, as did both Sting and Randy Savage.

"I'd never have anything to do with that, because I'm not scared of anyone," Sting said. "The Giant's big, but like the 'Hulkster' said, the bigger they come, the harder they fall. I'm a staunch believer that skill can overcome size any day of the week. Look at the last two WCW World champions, Randy Savage and Flair. They're not big men by any means. I beat Big Van Vader, and everybody said he was the most dangerous wrestler in the world. Heck, the 'Hulkster' turned him into a pussycat.

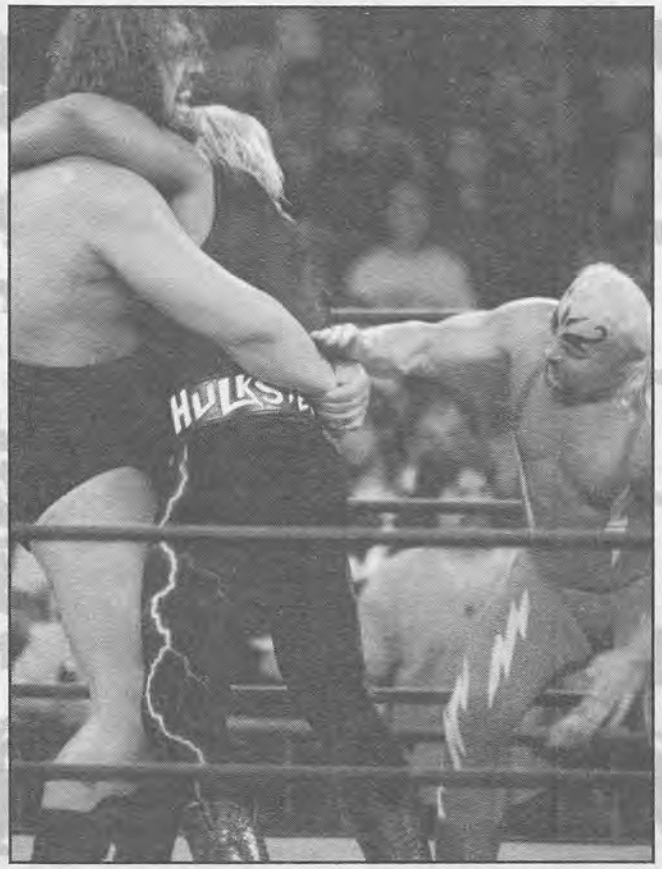
"But if you're asking me if I'd be surprised if a group of wrestlers got together and tried to get rid of him, no, that wouldn't surprise me at all," Sting added. "Those kinds of things happen all the time, but they usually happen with people like the Horsemen and the Dungeon trying to get rid of one of us."

What's known for sure is that The Giant is intimidating outsiders, and that could mean additional trouble for WCW in its efforts to win bidding wars with the WWF. Several wrestlers admitted privately that The Giant would be a hindrance to their signing with WCW.

"I'm not going in there, not with that monster running loose!" said one young independent wrestler who demanded anonymity. "First of all, it's complete anarchy in WCW. The Horsemen and the Dungeon of Doom have taken over, and the commissioner isn't doing anything about it. As long as there are no rules, The Giant can have his way with anyone. That's not a situation I'd look forward to getting involved with."

Nonetheless, there have been recent indications that, at this stage of his young career, The Giant's bark is bigger than his bite. He failed to beat former champion Savage in World title matches and has exposed weaknesses in his own game. Although The Giant is big, he has questionable stamina and below average lateral movement. Opponents have found that the key to beating The Giant is keeping him on the run for the first five minutes, then attacking his lower body.

Even that strategy isn't perfect. One false move lands a well-intentioned wrestler into the angry arms of a monster. Fee-fi-fo-fum anyone? The Giant has changed the rules ... and not for the better. □



For now, The Giant is relying on Kevin Sullivan for both guidance (above) and even some occasional help against Hogan (right). But Giant is so dangerous that it wouldn't be that shocking if he turned against Sullivan in the future.

Wrestling Experts Agree:

IT'S 1996 OR NEVER FOR RAZOR RAMON!

1993 saw Razor Ramon win his first Intercontinental title. He won another in 1994, then two in 1995. What does the rest of '96 hold for the "Bad Guy"? Another I-C title reign? How about a run at the WWF World title this time?!

By Bryan Ethier

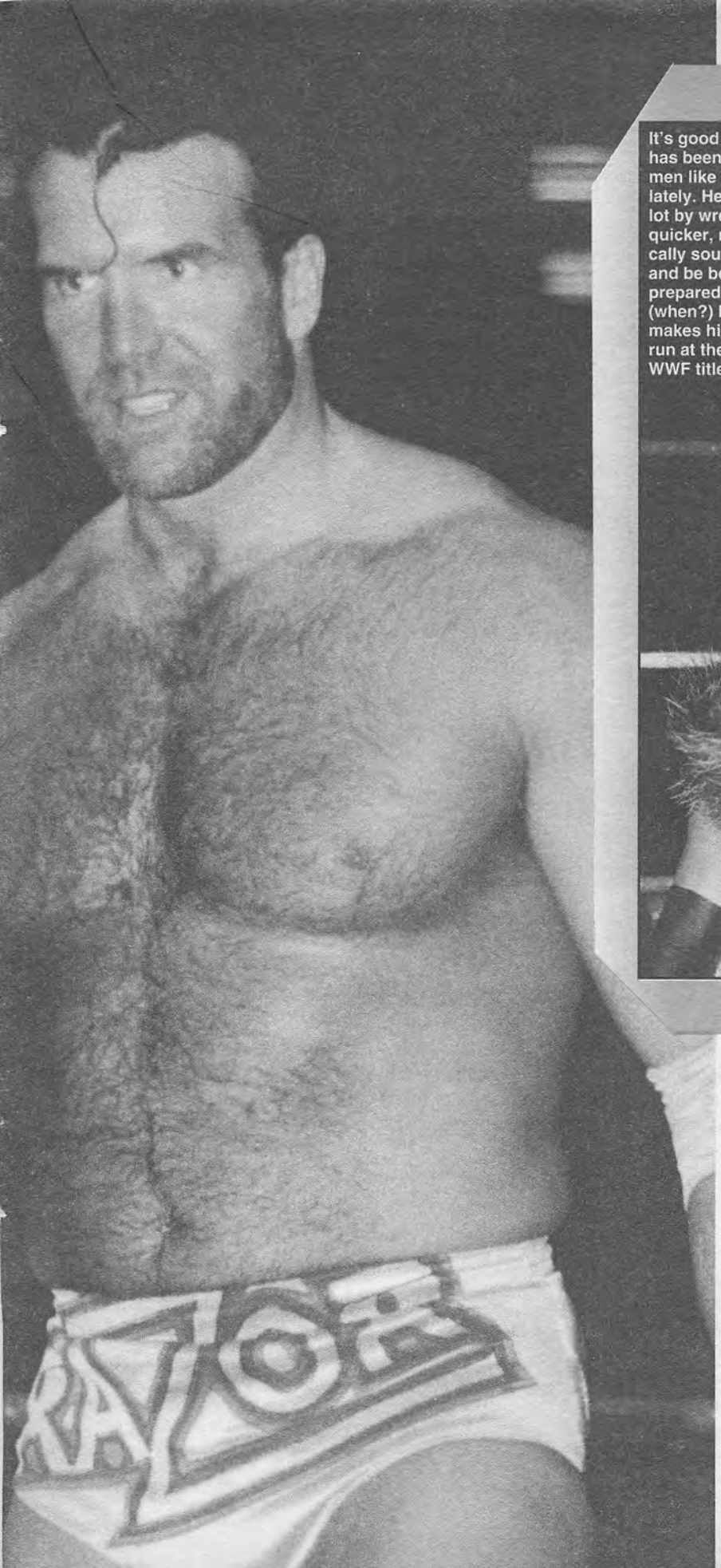
DAWN'S PEARLY LIGHT poured through the small, dirty window of the dusty coffee shop. It cast a small, golden spotlight upon the magazine that sat upon the ketchup-stained formica table before Razor Ramon.

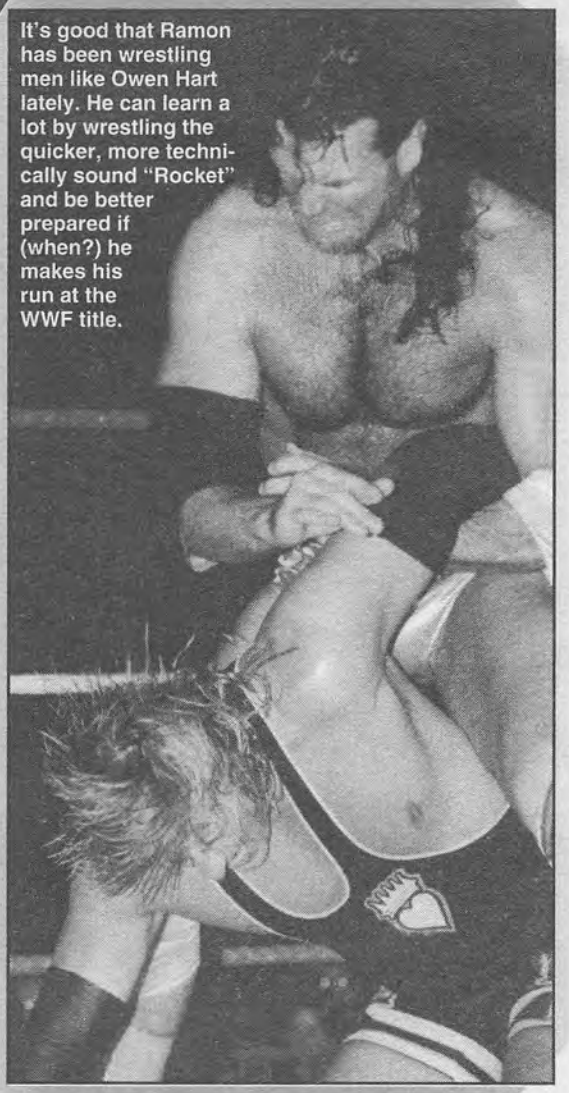
Should I read it? Ramon wondered. *It can only be bad news*, he concluded. In fact, since he lost the Intercontinental crown to Goldust, everything he has read about himself has been of a negative nature.

The headlines reeked of yellow journalism and utter disregard for one of the WWF's former top stars: "Ramon Has Lost It!" "The Bizarre One Takes Intercontinental Crown Away." Those were the least inflammatory headlines, actually. The more biting ones—well, you wouldn't even expect to read anything so libelous in a newsstand tabloid.

That's why Ramon cringed as he stared at the magazine curled between his bowl of cornflakes and an oversized raisin muffin.

A part of him begged to read



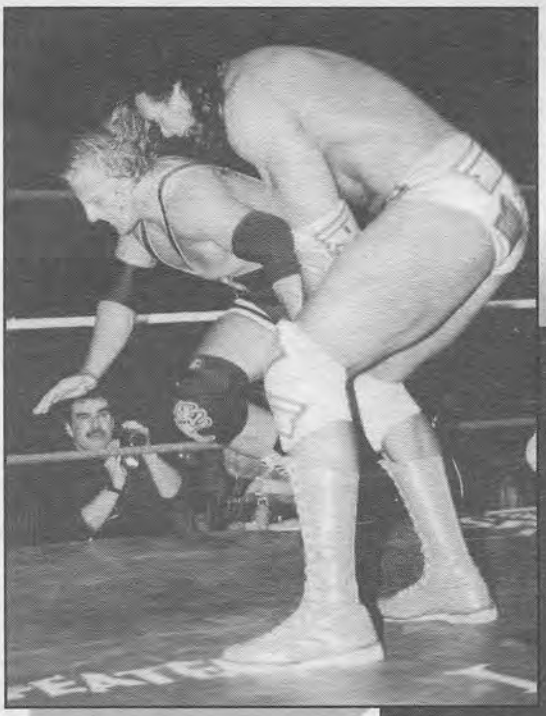


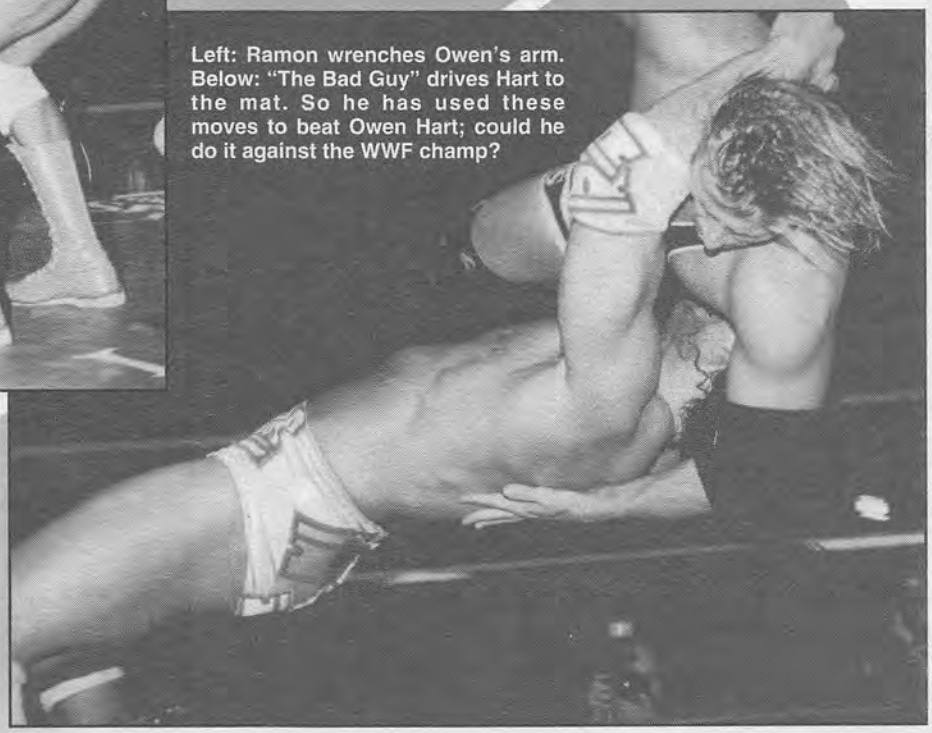
It's good that Ramon has been wrestling men like Owen Hart lately. He can learn a lot by wrestling the quicker, more technically sound "Rocket" and be better prepared if (when?) he makes his run at the WWF title.

the wrestling reviews and rankings. But that was the desperate side of Razor Ramon. The shattered part of his soul searching for any snippet of positive reviews ... anything that would prove that he was still considered among wrestling's elite.

Finally, he could no longer postpone the inevitable. Ramon slowly opened the magazine and scanned it. Nothing. No mention of Razor Ramon. He panned across to the latest WWF rankings. Bret Hart—World champion. Number-one contender—Goldust.

Ramon cringed. His stomach





Left: Ramon wrenches Owen's arm. Below: "The Bad Guy" drives Hart to the mat. So he has used these moves to beat Owen Hart; could he do it against the WWF champ?

instantly felt sour.

Number-two contender—Diesel. Then The Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, Ahmed Johnson ...

But no Razor Ramon. No, wait, there was his name—near the bottom of the WWF top 10. Was his career completely crumbling before his eyes?

Ramon pushed the magazine away and stared absently out the window. As he did, the sun moved past a string of wispy clouds. It filled the cramped restaurant with brilliant golden light that made specks of dust dance happily throughout the room. It was golden dust, Ramon observed with a half-hearted chuckle. *How wonderful*, he thought. *Golden dust ... Goldust.*

His worst nightmare.

As Ramon watched the golden dust dance around the restaurant, he divined the truth regarding his wrestling career: It had come to a screeching halt at the hands of the WWF's new Intercontinental champ, Goldust.

Shaken, Ramon pushed his breakfast aside and went to pay his bill. He had work to do and a new wrestling future to create. But as he emerged from the diner, Razor Ramon determined that he would have to take a different path if he was to regain a foothold over the wrestling world. And this route would no longer include petty quarrels with The 1-2-3 Kid nor arena brawls with Goldust.

"For Razor Ramon to regain the respect of his colleagues, and of himself, he has to take a shot at the WWF *World* title," concluded Rick Martel, who once feuded with Ramon. "He's no longer an upstart with time to waste. Consider that in a period of about two years, he won the Intercontinental belt four times and lost it four times. If he pursued it a fifth time—and devoted himself to beating Goldust—he would be doing nothing to reestablish himself as a marquee wrestler. Razor Ramon has to take the next step up the WWF ladder; he has to win the WWF crown."

Only by pursuing wrestling's top prize can Ramon prove that he is one of the WWF's all-time greats. At 6'8", 287 pounds, the "Bad Guy" has the brawn and strength

to be WWF World champ. In many ways, he resembles former WWF champ Diesel. Both men are as powerful as steam trains and very cocky. The difference between the two, however, is that Diesel was *driven* to win the WWF World title. For the past 2½ years, Ramon has been happy pursuing and defending the secondary belt.

Now he has nothing.

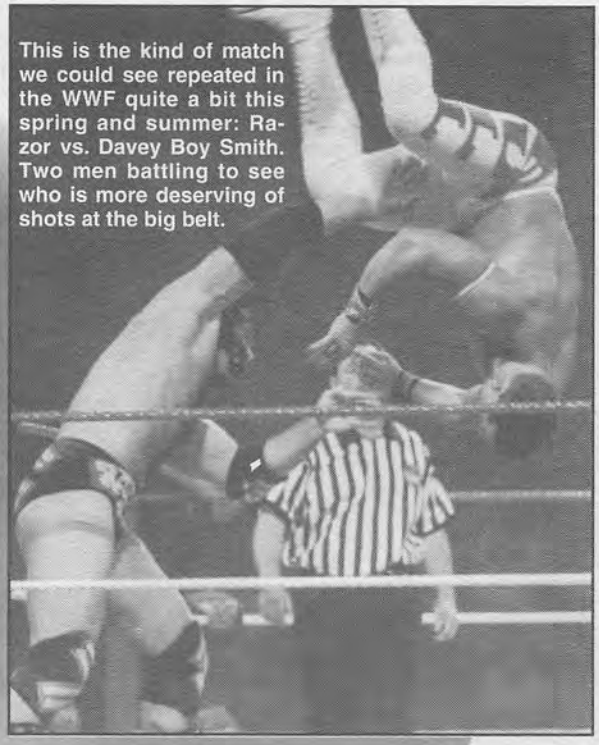
"These have to be tough times for Razor Ramon," explained former WWF star Bam Bam Bigelow. "He's no longer this 25-year-old kid with the world in front of him. You never know much time in the spotlight you'll have left. Worse yet, he will first have to beat a bunch of good wrestlers before he can get a shot at the World title."

If that's the case, matches against Shawn Michaels, The Undertaker, Owen Hart, Diesel, Ahmed Johnson, and Jeff Jarrett all could loom on the horizon. But no more grudge matches with The Kid. Every night will be the ultimate challenge for Razor Ramon. Does he have the mettle to overcome the stiff competition and his own insecurity as a wrestler?

"Don't buy that all that machismo stuff," advised Bigelow. "Ramon isn't always that confident. But I'll tell you this: Losing the I-C belt to Goldust was the best thing that could have happened to Razor. Now he's left with two choices: Take the matches the WWF offers to him and try to get revenge on The Kid and Goldust, or he can get back into the gym, bust his butt to get into peak condition, and do *whatever* it takes to get back to the top of the WWF. Then he can challenge for the World title, and fans will finally get to see just how good a wrestler he is. I don't think we've seen the *real* Razor Ramon yet. My gut tells me that in 1996, we will."

If not, wrestling fans may be forced to drive to downtown Miami to find Ramon. For they won't see him in the squared circle anymore. □

Maybe Razor has consciously WWF title matches in the last few years. He has beaten Yokozuna several times in the last few *months*, but he never pursued a match with Yoko when he was WWF World champ in 1993 and '94.



This is the kind of match we could see repeated in the WWF quite a bit this spring and summer: Razor vs. Davey Boy Smith. Two men battling to see who is more deserving of shots at the big belt.

LOOSE CANNON!

BRIAN PILLMAN'S SHORT FUSE MAY BLOW HIS CAREER!

By Dave Rosenbaum

"He doesn't think before he acts. He has all the talent to be a great wrestler, but his brain has never been able to catch up with his God-given talent. He was a great tag team partner, but the thing I remember the most was that he could never stick with the game plan. I always had to figure out what he was doing. It was like playing in the band for Frank Sinatra."

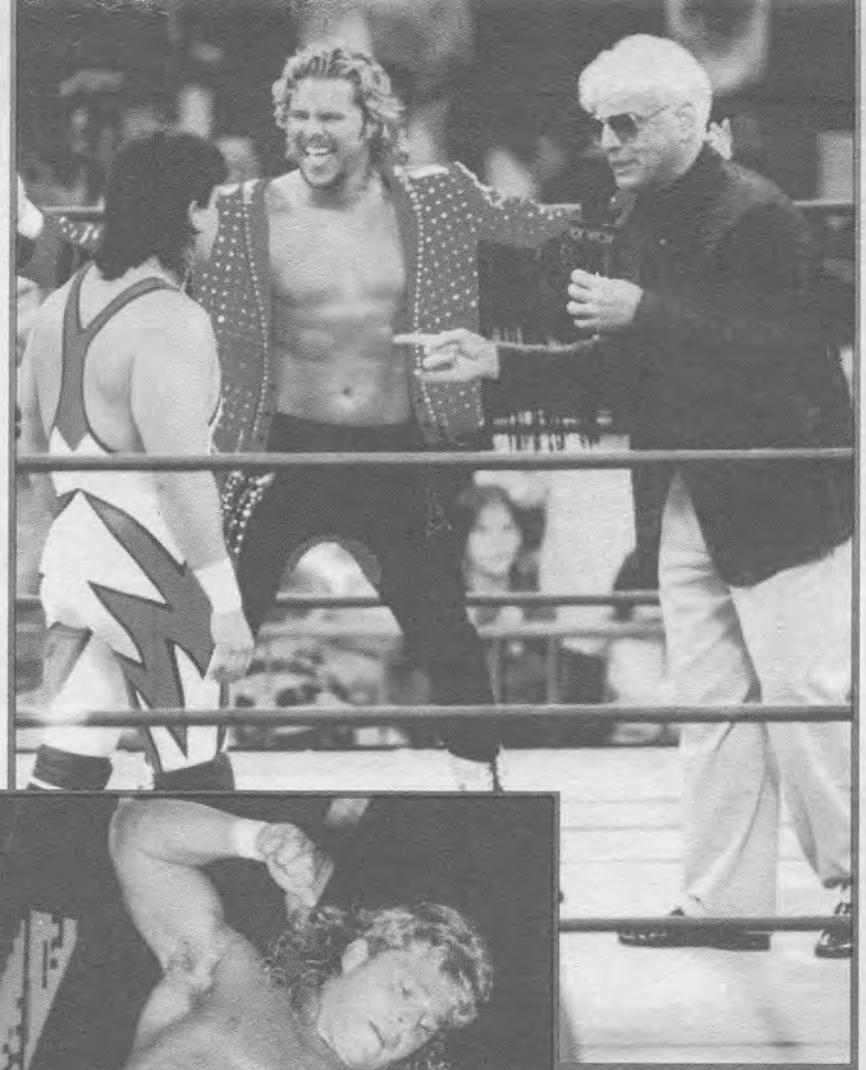
—Steve Austin, on former teammate Brian Pillman, July 1995

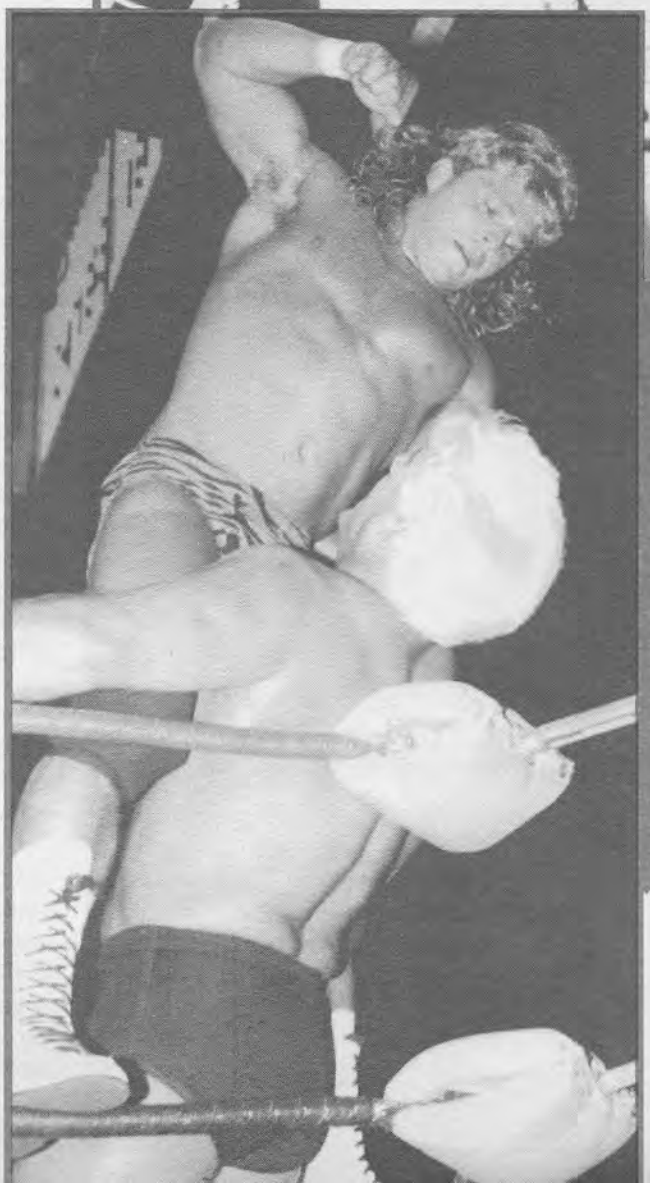
BRIAN PILLMAN SLAMMED the locker shut, sat on the wooden bench, and opened a big bottle of watermelon-flavored Gatorade. Beads of sweat had formed on his forehead, even though he had just taken a shower 15 minutes earlier, and he was showing some red around the ears.

"The answer is no!" Pillman shouted. "I don't take orders from nobody at any time. If somebody wants a piece of me, they're gonna have to realize it's an equal tradeoff. You want something from me, you give me something in return, but never, ever tell me what to do!"

If Brian Pillman could have written the epitaph on his short career as a member of The Four Horsemen, that would have been it right there. Unable to follow orders, unwilling to adopt the Horsemen's "one for all and all for one" credo, Pillman was doomed from the start, and you have to wonder why he joined the group in the first place.

He is, as a former opponent once called him, "Flyin' Off The Handle" Brian Pillman, or, as a former teammate once called him, "Fryin' Flyin'" Brian Pillman. Pillman is one of the most exciting and quickest aerial wrestlers in the world, but it's clear the pace





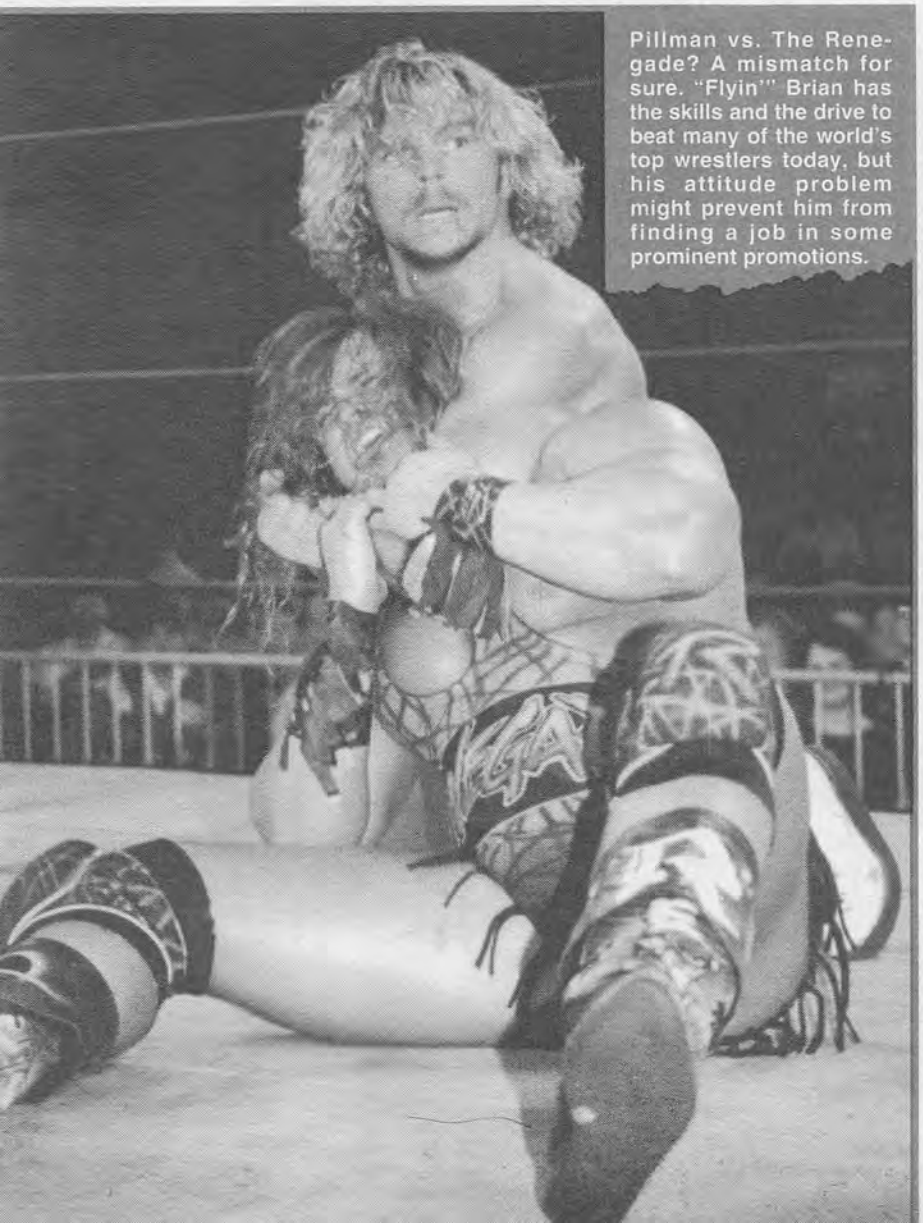
There were times when Pillman was by Ric Flair's side, taunting foes such as Eddy Guerrero (above), but he was never interested in *protecting* Flair. He would have rather tested himself *against* Flair, just like he did in 1991 (left).

A rare sight in recent times: Pillman coming to the aid of woozy fellow Horseman Arn Anderson. Pillman never bought into the "all for one and one for all" Horsemen philosophy. He was too selfish to work for a group.

and the intensity don't stop when the matches are over.

"Pillman," Arn Anderson said, "just didn't know when to shut his big mouth and start following orders. What was going on here was for the best of the group. If Pillman couldn't handle that, then maybe he didn't belong with us in the first place. It takes a special kind of person to be a Horseman, and he ain't it."

No, Pillman wasn't that kind of person. Neither were Lex Luger or Sting, both former Horsemen, but they were able to continue building their careers after leaving the clique. Whether Pillman can rebuild remains to be seen, because there are many people who feel his short temper has hindered his career progress.



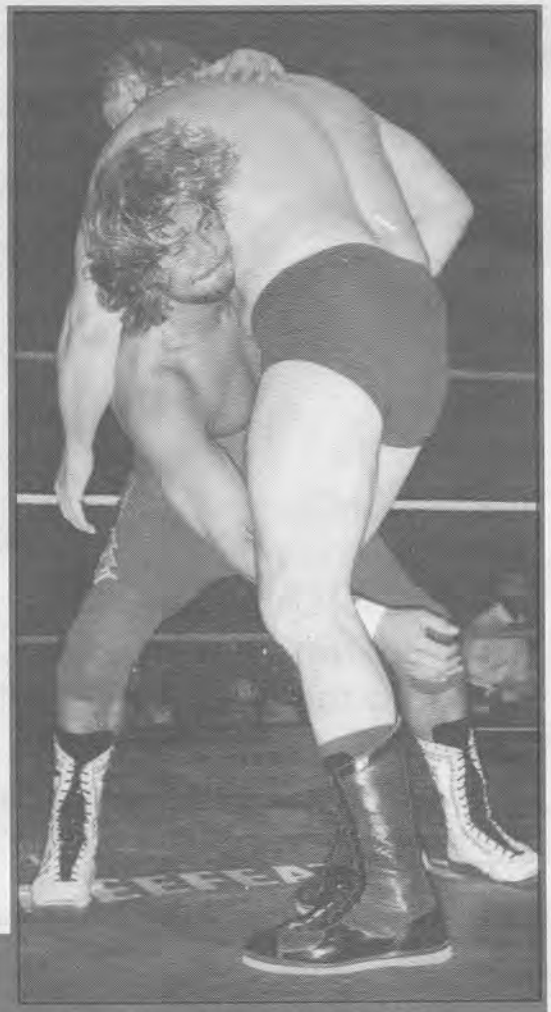
Pillman vs. The Renegade? A mismatch for sure. "Flyin'" Brian has the skills and the drive to beat many of the world's top wrestlers today, but his attitude problem might prevent him from finding a job in some prominent promotions.

At press time, Pillman was out of a job with the Horsemen and WCW and rumored to be headed to the WWF. If he can't occasionally swallow his pride and learn to get along with his peers if he does show up in the WWF, then he might be doomed to spending the rest of his career on the independent circuit.

That's the career choice facing Pillman: Put up and shut up, or fade out. Unfortunately for him, the decision might not be in his hands.

"I don't think it is," said Johnny B. Badd. "Pillman's the kind of guy who acts first and suffers the consequences later. I don't even think he realizes what he's doing until afterward. Then he realizes he might have messed up."

Pillman had a grand opportunity with the Horsemen, but he just couldn't get along with his teammates. The Horsemen agenda of protecting Ric Flair "wasn't in my best interests," Pillman said. "The meetings were a joke. Anderson's devoted his life to serving Flair. I wasn't will-



Not much was made of it, but when Pillman wrestled Terry (above left) and Dory Funk (above right) on a special card to honor Stu Hart in December, it was against the wishes of Flair and Arn. He doesn't have to worry about satisfying the Horsemen anymore.

ing to do that, and I don't think [Chris] Benoit is, either. Why should I serve Flair? I can beat him. I can beat anyone. I'm not worried about anyone but me right now."

Pillman's rocky tenure as a Horseman was marked by shouting matches with Anderson and Flair and arguments with Benoit. He often insulted his teammates and blamed them for losses—once he publicly ridiculed Anderson and Benoit for losses at a *WCW Monday Nitro* card—while never turning the critical eye on himself. Anderson once got so mad at Pillman that he slapped his face on national TV. A few weeks later, he was ready to take off his belt and thrash Pillman to teach him a lesson.

"He was always late for meetings, then when he showed up, he didn't even try to listen," Anderson said. "I don't know how we could have gone so wrong, making him a member of the most feared wrestling supergroup in history."

Flair refused to comment on Pillman's departure other than to say Pillman was "a talented wrestler who doesn't act in his own best interests."

Pillman refuted that criticism and said, "The problem is I'm a talented wrestler who refused to act in Flair's best interests."

The next step is a critical one for Pillman. He's a good enough singles wrestler to challenge for the WWF Intercontinental title, or he could find another partner who suits his style. Pillman has always preferred tag teams. One problem is that potential teammates might be afraid to go near him. If so, Pillman would have no choice but to go it alone. He says he's not afraid of that prospect.

"It's time for me to stop letting my career get sidetracked by inferior teammates," Pillman said. "People sometimes come up to me and say, 'Brian, you're one of the greatest wrestlers in the world, so how come you've never won a world title?' You know something? They're right. The reason I've never won a world title is because I'm always letting people hold me back."

If lack of introspection can lead to a man's downfall, Pillman has just written his own ending. □

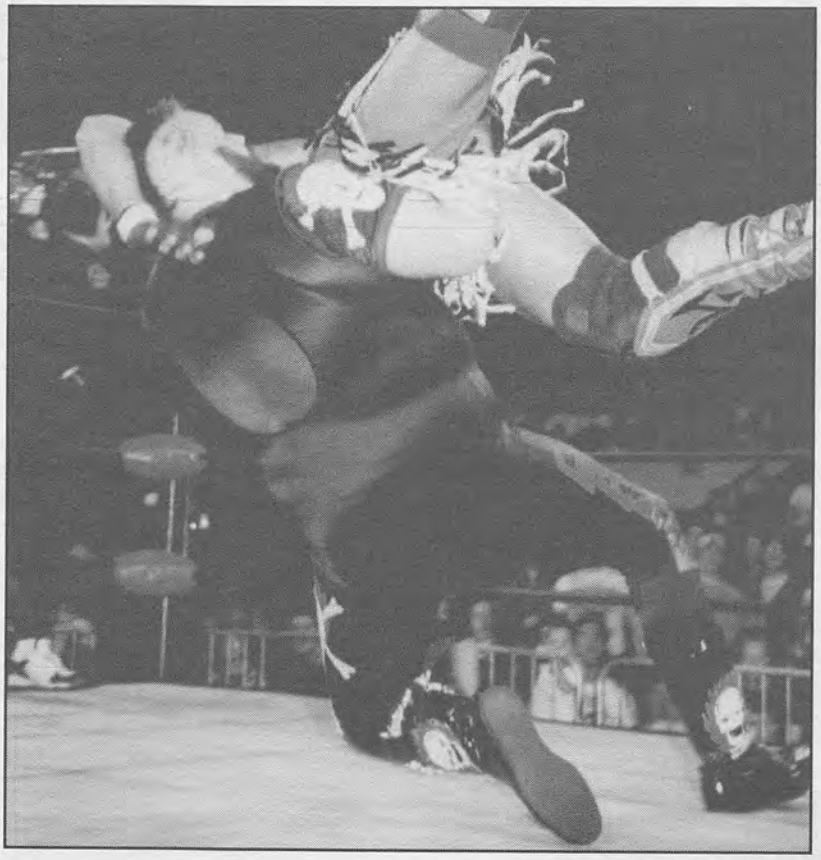
Q&A

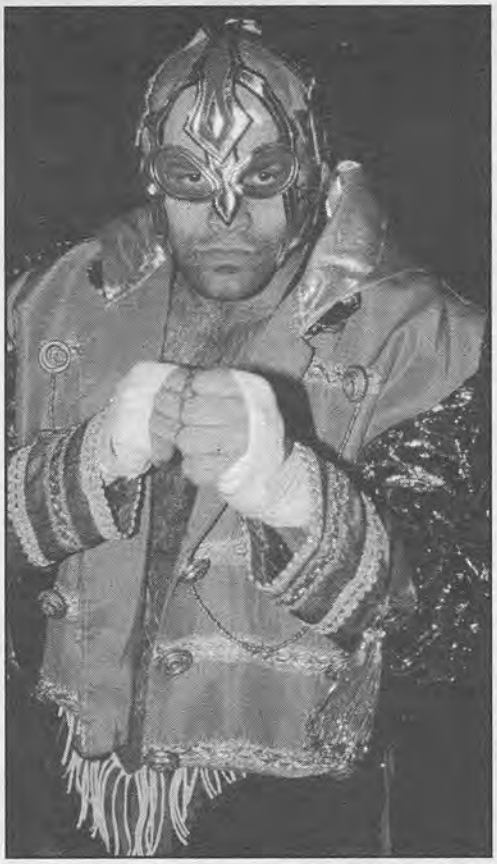
Each month, *THE WRESTLER* will present a "Question and Answer" forum with an important figure in the wrestling world. It is your chance to meet wrestling's biggest stars as they answer the questions uppermost in fans' minds

Q: Congratulations on winning the U.S. title, and on behalf of my colleagues at THE WRESTLER, welcome to the United States. You have certainly made an impact already.

A: Thank you. This is something I've been looking forward to for a long time. I promised myself ever since the last time I came to WCW that the next time it would be different. I am not a man who likes to waste time. The last time it was a matter of trying to find out what I had to do to become the best in the world. By going back to Mexico, improvement came little by little until it was time to make my return. Now this is for real. There is no turning back.

Q: But it must be difficult leaving your home, coming to a foreign country, and trying to make an impact.



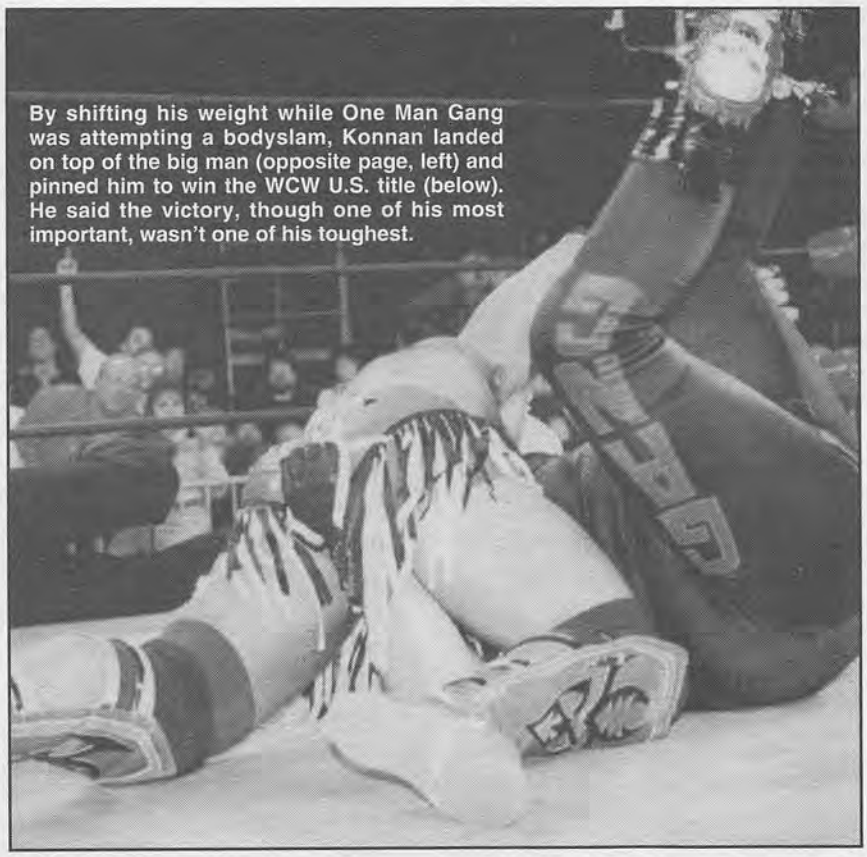


KONNAN

COLORFUL MASKS AND colorful styles have become the recent trademark of Mexican wrestlers, but there's plenty of substance behind the style, too. Mexico has been one of the most prodigious recent sources of hot young wrestling talent, and Konnan is the rage of the day.

For years one of Mexico's most successful wrestlers, Konnan signed with in late-1995 and wasted no time making a run at the heavyweight title. Then-ECW heavyweight champion The Sandman needed Woman's assistance to hold off Konnan's attack in a match in early-January.

Konnan didn't come away with that belt, but he soon got the attention of WCW promoters. Within weeks, Konnan was re-signed by WCW (he briefly wrestled in the federation a few years ago), and on January 23 he defeated Psicosis by submission at Clash of the Champions XXXII. Six days later, in only his second WCW match, Konnan shocked One Man Gang for the U.S. title. And two weeks after that, he successfully defended the belt against OMG. Though it took fans in ECW a while to warm up to him, Konnan is already very popular in WCW. Senior Writer Dave Rosenbaum talked to Konnan about his quick rise to the top of WCW, his brief run in ECW, and more prior to a WCW TV taping.



By shifting his weight while One Man Gang was attempting a bodyslam, Konnan landed on top of the big man (opposite page, left) and pinned him to win the WCW U.S. title (below). He said the victory, though one of his most important, wasn't one of his toughest.

A: Leaving home is difficult, but I do not consider America to be a foreign country. It is our neighbor to the north, and I have been to America many times, especially wrestling with AAA. What's new is that the promoters are not Mexican, the other wrestlers are not Mexican, and the fans are different.

Q: Let's talk about that. The fans are obviously very different. When you were in AAA, you were incredibly popular. Now the fans in WCW seem to love you, but the reaction was mixed in ECW. Why is that?

A: I do not know. I cannot read their minds, but it is not a matter of loving me or hating me. The most important thing when you go into the ring every night is to work hard and give 100 percent. That is what I try to do every time, and all fans should

appreciate that. Love and hate is too much. Respect and like would be very nice.

Q: You've wrestled in so many promotions. Why do you think the ECW fans were so hard for you to please?

A: **Those are very strange fans. A wrestler told me that it takes a long time for them to like a person. They need to see what he's all about and decide whether he's for real. Maybe they didn't have the time to decide that with me. They have seen a lot of incredible things in ECW. People say it is the most violent federation in the world. Maybe they are not easily impressed. They expect you to top what was done in the last match, and sometimes they don't seem to be happy if you don't leave the ring with blood gushing down your face. But I did not have time to stay behind and impress them. I needed to come here. When promoters from WCW say they want you, that is not the time to think about it and say, "Maybe later. I will think about it and get back to you." It was time.**

Q: Was it ahead of schedule? In other words, were you surprised that WCW went after you so quickly?

A: **I cannot judge their timing. They knew about me. They knew about all that I have accomplished in my country. Perhaps when they saw I was back in the United States, they realized it was time to give me another try. They are very, as you might say, forward. They have taken many chances on unproven talent. I do not consider myself unproven talent or a risk, but maybe they do.**

Konnan came close to winning the ECW title after caning The Sandman during a January 5 match, but he ultimately lost that bout. He thinks WCW promoters noticed how well he wrestled in ECW.

Q: Hardly, considering you wasted no time winning the U.S. title from One Man Gang.

A: **That was not that difficult. I respect all of my opponents, including One Man Gang, but he has great size and not much else. A wrestler knows that great art can overcome great size any time, and this was another example of that. I can see where One Man Gang might give some wrestlers a great deal of trouble, but not a wrestler with a lot of quickness and skill. It was not my toughest match.**

Q: You sound very confident.

A: **I am very confident, but I am also speaking the truth.**

Q: And what's next?

A: **What's next? I am U.S. champion. That's enough for now, but not enough for all-time. The next step is the WCW World title, the only goal. I did not come here to be the secondary champion. I will keep defending the U.S. title until promoters decide I deserve a match for the World title.**

Q: Although you realize people are saying that you can, as they say, breathe life into the U.S. belt.

A: **That is very flattering. Thank you.**

Q: Tell me a little bit about your style.

A: **It is a traditional Mexican style. In Mexico, the great Mil Mascaras is a legend and a hero to every young boy who wants to become a wrestler. We all want to be like him. That's why you see so many Mexican wrestlers wearing masks. It is both in honor of him and to copy him. He was not only a great star, he is a great person. He was also the greatest flying wrestler of all-time. Mil Mascaras made it possible, and most moves I do are a variation or a takeoff on the moves he made. There is no doubt. He is the father of Mexican wrestling. But I also use many submission holds and try to be the best mat wrestler I can be, too.**

Q: And, like you, Mascaras is a movie star.

A: **Excuse me? I am not a movie star.**

Discriminating ECW fans were impressed by this flying shoulderblock Konnan used on La Parka back in October. It took them a while, however, to appreciate his skills. He said he thinks they are too hard to please.

Konnan teamed with Rey Misterio Jr. a few times in 1995, but in his first stint in WCW, in 1990, Konnan (back) teamed with Rey Misterio Sr. (front, holding Chris Adams by the hair). He's a better wrestler now than he was then.

Q: Sure. How about those Conan the Barbarian movies. Wasn't that you?

A: I don't know what you're talking about.

Q: You know, sheep skin. Bikini babes. Big clubs. Conan the Barbarian.

A: I am not Conan the Barbarian. I am Konnan.

Q: But don't you want people to believe that you're Conan the Barbarian?

A: I do not know what people think. I am Konnan. I am not a barbarian. But I do do some acting in a soap opera in my country.

Q: Okay, we're obviously getting nowhere with this line of questioning. Tell me, Konnan, how long do you plan to stay in America?

A: For as long as it takes or as long as they want me. I have come here with the goal of being WCW World heavyweight champion. When that happens, I will defend my title, but I am not a fortuneteller. I cannot tell the future.

Q: Well, how about Ric Flair and Randy Savage? What will it take for you to beat either one of them, and how about Hulk Hogan?

A: Ric Flair is a great wrestler, but he makes many mistakes. Randy Savage is a very good wrestler who tries too many things. Hulk Hogan is a great brawler, but I now I can beat him by using my skills the same way I beat One Man Gang.

Q: You're confident that your skills can overcome any wrestler in the world?

A: Any wrestler. I will show you.

Q: Well, Konnan, you obviously mean business. Good luck to you.

A: Thank you. And to the fans, I say watch what I am doing. The rules are important, and so is winning fairly. If that is the type of wrestler you like, then you must root for Konnan. □

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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)

sickening! There is no comparison between the two.

Because you're a man, Harry Simon, you wouldn't realize how sexy Adam Bomb is. His smile was enough to melt my heart. He didn't need to dance. All he had to do was walk down the aisle. That was enough to send shivers up my spine.

Harry Simon, that Disco duck will never compare to the great Adam Bomb no matter what he does in WCW.

SARAH RICKETTS
Danby, VT

Union Jack is popular in Great Britain, but few fans in America have ever heard of him. Reader Ben Richards, who saw him live in Britain and snapped this photo, anxiously awaits his U.S. debut.

A BRITISH SENSATION

I recently had the chance to go to Great Britain with my father on the condition that, since I would be missing a few pay-per-views, we would see some authentic British professional wrestling. A couple of days into our trip, we went to a card in Birmingham. It was explained to me before the card that the British professional wrestling style is different than the American style, so I had no idea what to expect.

I found the first couple of matches to be a little boring. The action was similar to amateur wrestling, with limited aerial moves, but the main event was different. A wrestler named Union Jack entered the ring to a chorus of screaming fans and loud music blaring from the sound system. At first I expected some Lord Steven Regal ripoff, but Union Jack was an awesome high-flyer with great scientific skills. This popular, 6'5", 252-pound wrestler had the fans going wild during his whole match. He was like Britain's version of Sting.

I had the chance to meet Union Jack in the locker room after the card, and he said that he might be coming to the United States soon. I, for one, will be anxiously awaiting his debut in America.

BEN RICHARDS
Pensacola, FL

BADD DESERVES BETTER

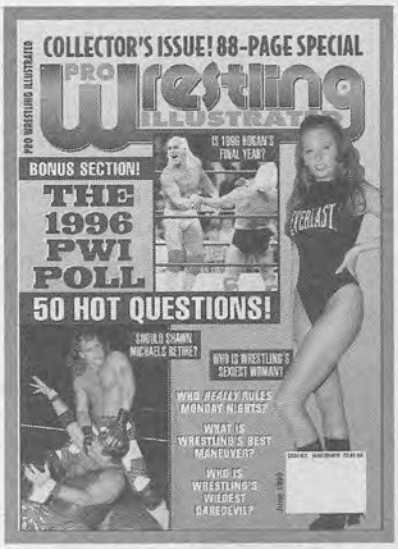
After reading the "Q & A" with Johnny B. Badd in your March 1996 issue, I came to the conclusion that Badd must be one of the nicest gentlemen in wrestling today. He should be commended for what he has done to help The Diamond Doll get away from "Diamond" Dallas Page. He has helped her realize what a self-centered slimeball Page is and that she is the kind of lady who deserves to be treated with respect.

I hope that Johnny B. Badd has a long reign as WCW TV champion, and I hope that someday he will get the chance to be WCW World champion, because he deserves it.

MARLENA ERGO
Chicago, IL ☐

this month in...

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

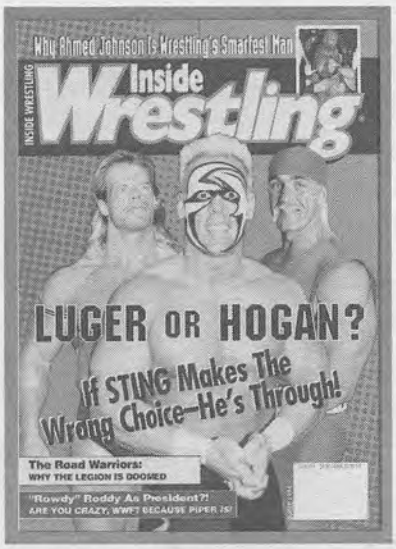


Who is, pound-for-pound, the best wrestler in the world? Who *really* rules Monday night wrestling? Is this **HULK HOGAN'S** last year? Who is wrestling's sexiest woman? We asked these questions and many, many more to a group of wrestling insiders. You might be shocked by the results! … What's ahead in the rocky relationship between **LEX LUGER** and **STING**? … Just when we all thought the war between the **HARTS** was calming down, **OWEN** put a family bounty out on **BRET**! … Don't miss our exclusive coverage of the ongoing WWF-WCW wars!

All this—and much more!—
in the June 1996 issue of
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

NOW ON SALE!

Inside Wrestling



STING has a decision to make, a decision that will affect the rest of his life: Does he remain friends with **HULK HOGAN**, or **LEX LUGER**? He must decide, and if he makes the wrong choice, he's through! … Do you think the WWF was crazy to hire **RODDY PIPER** as its acting president? We do! … Did **ANIMAL** come back too soon? Can **THE ROAD WARRIORS** climb to the top again? We'll tell you why this Legion is Doomed! … The **YOKOZUNA-JIM CORNETTE** split sure was ugly; you won't believe what they said when we brought them together "One On One"!

All this—and much more!—
in the June 1996 issue of
Inside Wrestling

NOW ON SALE!

(Continued from page 7)

PG-13's Wolfie D dropkicks a chair into Tracey Smothers' face. PG-13 recently won the USWA tag belts from Smothers and Jesse James Armstrong. In the aftermath of their loss, Armstrong and Smothers split up.

Randy Savage for seven years" and that she was sick of doing that. She added that she took half of many of the things she and Savage shared during their marriage and now was proud to have helped Flair win the WCW World title from him.

The Smokin' Gunns had to forfeit the WWF World tag team title when **Billy Gunn** suffered a severe neck injury. The vacant title was to be filled in a tournament.

"Loose cannon" **Brian Pillman** was fired by WCW after several incidents the organization deemed "highly unprofessional." Just days after his dismissal, Pillman showed up, unannounced and uninvited, at an ECW card in Philadelphia. He got into the ring and immediately began cursing at everyone. He was promptly ejected from the building by security guards.

Pillman did, however, contact ECW promoters the following day and has been booked for several matches. He has been told that if he acts the way he did in his first ECW appearance, he will be arrested!

According to **Tracey Smothers** and his USWA manager, **Brandon Baxter**, it's **Jesse James Armstrong's** fault that he and Smothers lost the USWA tag team belts to **PG-13** just three days after they won them this February.

"That idiot screwed up everything!" Baxter told reporters. "I had contracts signed for endorsements, world tours lined up, but Armstrong blew it all by not listening to me!" The truth of the matter is that Baxter tried to interfere in the match several times, but the interference backfired and Armstrong got pinned instead. Armstrong looked like he was about to take a swing at Baxter while Baxter yelled at him, but before Armstrong could throw his punch, Smothers attacked him!

"Truth of the matter is that Baxter killed this team," Armstrong told me. "Too bad, 'cause we had a great thing going. He's got Tracey on his side now, and I'm sure we'll be wrestling each other a lot, but I just want to warn him that Baxter will kill his career as well!"

"Brandon Baxter helped us fine-tune as a team," responded Smothers. "He's a genius. Armstrong doesn't know how to follow instructions, and that's what cost us the belts. I'm through with him. I'm staying with a winner—a man by the name of Brandon Baxter!"

Al Snow is still accepting matches for Mid-West Championship Wrestling, where he is feuding with **Bruiser Bedlam** ... **The Night Rider** won a 14-man battle royal in North Miami Beach in February, and as a result, he is the new Sunshine Wrestling Federation Florida heavyweight champion ... After tossing a fireball at **"Iceman" Mike Murphy**, **Count Grog**, manager of **Major**

(Continued on page 72)

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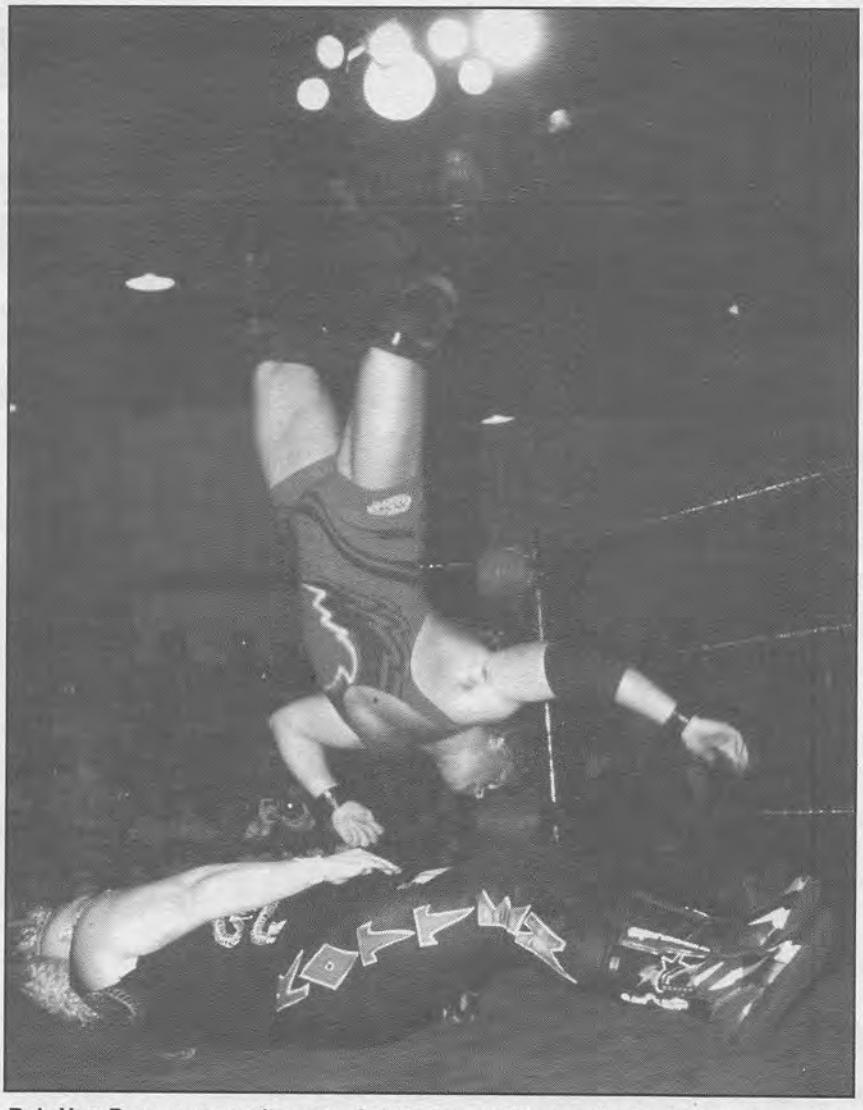
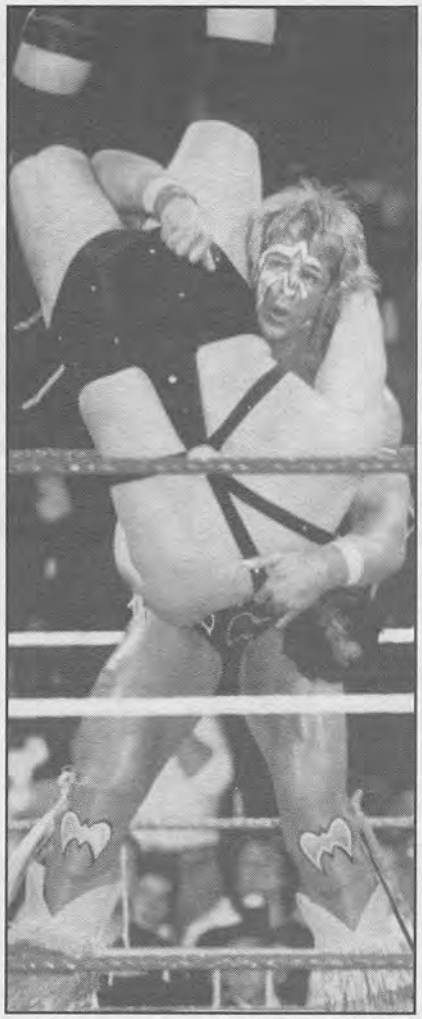
(Continued from page 70)

DeBeers, was suspended for one month by The Great American Wrestling Federation. To make matters worse for Grog, GAWF officials also suspended DeBeers ... Capitol Pro Wrestling heavyweight champion **Bobby Blaze** admits that "**Regulator Stone** is wearing me down. I have to keep all my wits about me, or that title will be his real soon."

As of press time, the WWF appeared to be close to signing **The Ultimate Warrior**. As you'll probably recall, the WWF had talked to him late last year, but the two sides weren't able to reach an agreement then ... **Jeff Jarrett** had to be taken to a hospital after a recent match against **Ahmed Johnson** in Memphis. Jarrett leaped from the ring apron onto the floor in an attempt to attack Ahmed, but his back locked up on him in the process. After examining him at a hospital, doctors sent Jarrett home and told him to stay off his feet. At press time, it was not known how long he would be out or if he would have to give up the USWA heavyweight title.



Rob Van Dam moonsaults onto Axl Rotten. Until recently had been competing almost exclusively in Japan, but he seems to have found a home in ECW. He will be wrestling both there and in the Orient in the next few months.



He's back ... we think ... maybe. At press time, The Ultimate Warrior was apparently close to signing with the WWF again. But of course we've heard that before.

Akira Taue and **Toshiaki Kawada** have regained the All-Japan and Pacific Wrestling Federation tag team belts from **Stan Hansen** and **Gary Albright** ... **Dory Funk Jr.** remains active in wrestling; he has been teaming with **Takao Omori** in Japan ... **Rob Van Dam** is now splitting his time between All-Japan and ECW.

That's what's happening. I'll see you at the matches! □

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1) Abdullah The Butcher
2) The Sheik
3) Pampero Firpo
4) Cactus Jack

Paul Orndorff played pro football for what NFL team?
1) New Orleans Saints
2) Dallas Cowboys
3) Los Angeles Rams
4) New York Jets

True or False: Razor Ramon attended high school in Germany
1) True
2) False

Steve Austin was the first graduate of what professional wrestler's wrestling school?
1) Ultimate Warrior
2) Larry Sharpe
3) Chris Adams
4) Killer Kowalski

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4145/11-95

NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)

Elizabeth and Randy were the picture of happiness when they got married at SummerSlam '91. Everyone knows that marriage ended in divorce, but Liz apparently couldn't stand to see her ex happy and successful in 1996.

emotions crushed by a slap in the face and an ambush by the lady's goons. It's hard to say which hurt worse. I'll go with the slap.

By hanging around with Woman, Elizabeth was asking for some bad advice.

But I think it happened long before Woman came upon the scene. It has been said that the eyes are a mirror to a man's soul, and that certainly goes for women, too. Forget the way she used to dress. Elizabeth always had a peaceful, happy look about her. She was Snow White. She was Cinderella. She could have been dressed in black lingerie and six-inch spiked heels, and nobody would have ever believed she was anything but a good girl.

When she showed up at the Clash, it wasn't only the outfit that was different. It was the eyes. For the first time in her life, Elizabeth looked worldly.

Something happened between the time Savage fell in love with her, proposed to her on national TV, married her on national TV, and the present. We don't know the details—perhaps Elizabeth will share them with us one day—but maybe the divorce was dirty. Maybe the lawyers went at it tooth-and-nail and Elizabeth didn't get everything she wanted, or felt she deserved. Because let's face it: For years, Elizabeth was the woman behind the man, the stabilizing influence who made those two WWF World title reigns of Savage's possible. Without Elizabeth, Savage was an uncontrollable maniac with no focus.

We don't know, but we can guess, because the story has been told a million times.

The divorce happened, for whatever reasons. Two people who spent so many years together suddenly were apart. Maybe Elizabeth went looking for love in all the wrong places. Or maybe she found a man who made the "Macho Man" pale by comparison. Or maybe things just didn't work out, and returning to wrestling was a desperate move.

Somewhere along the line, Elizabeth convinced Savage, or Savage convinced Elizabeth, or maybe they convinced each other, that they could get along as friends and maybe even work together. Savage and Elizabeth was always better than just Savage. Beauty and the beast.

So it happened, and who knows why or what was going on in the background. This reminds me of the movie *Indecent Proposal*, the one in which Demi Moore and Woody Harrelson are deeply in love until Robert Redford, the millionaire, offers the married couple $1-million if he can have one blissful night with the wife.

At first, the Moore and Harrelson characters are deeply disgusted by the Redford character, who thinks he can buy anything, even love. Thinking they have nothing to lose and love will conquer all, the man and woman accept the offer. Moore's character finally spends a night with the millionaire, and it ruins their marriage. The Harrelson character can't overcome his jealousy. And the woman falls in love with the millionaire.

Years ago, when he was in the WWF, Ric Flair suggested he had a relationship with Elizabeth and withheld from Savage some compromising photographs, supposedly of Miss Liz. Elizabeth couldn't disguise her distaste for Flair then.

And now she's on his arms and in his gurney.

But she obviously is not a happy woman. Her bitterness shows. The eyes no longer sparkle. They burn, not with desire, but with fire, and it is an unfortunate sight to see a beautiful, classy, and elegant woman change before our eyes. □

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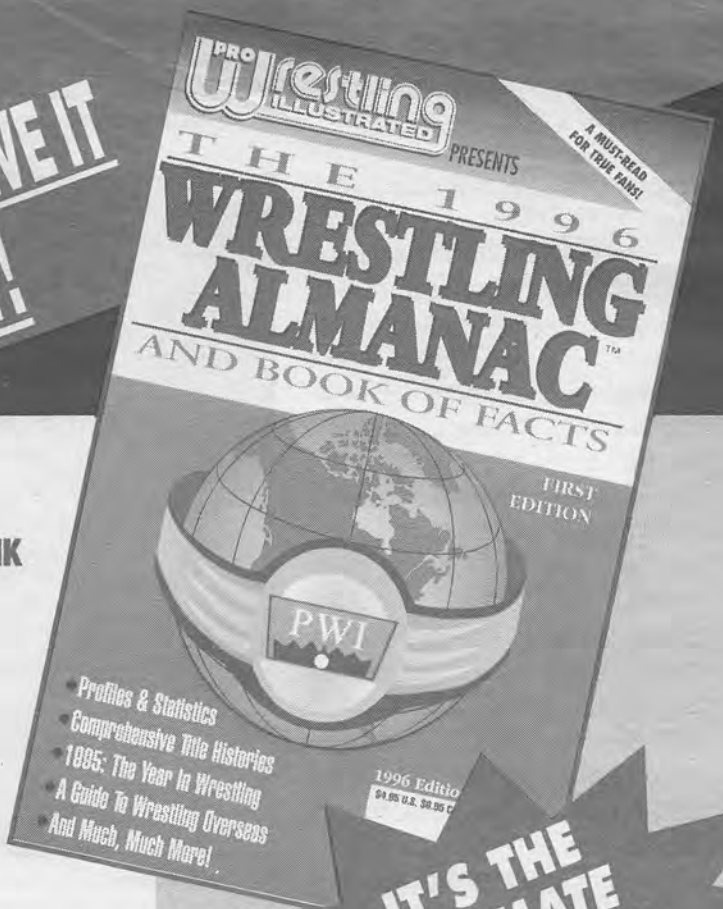

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(Continued from page 14)

grabbed him and pulled him back down to the mat.

The two went on to exchange punches, bodyslams, and various other moves for the next few minutes. Soon both were exhausted. Hart somehow summoned enough energy to climb to the top of the cage. At the same time, Diesel crawled toward the door. It was close, but Hart got over the top and down to the arena floor just before Diesel made it through the door. Diesel, however, thought he had won and grabbed the belt. When told Bret had won, he whipped "The Hitman" into the side of the cage before heading to his dressing room.

In other bouts: Marty Jannetty defeated Mo ... Duke "The Dumpster" Droese defeated Barry Horowitz ... Fatu pinned Mr. Bob Backlund ... Skip & Zip defeated "Man O' War" Aldo Montoya & Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly ... Savio Vega defeated Dr. Isaac Yankem ... Goldust pinned Henry Godwinn ... Ahmed Johnson defeated "Double-J" Jeff Jarrett ... The Undertaker beat Yokozuna ... WWF World tag team champions The Smokin' Gunns defeated Owen Hart & Davey Boy Smith ... Razor Ramon defeated Hunter Hearst Helmsley by disqualification.

Cherry Hill, NJ *(Correspondent—Michael J. DiMuzio):* The NWA North American title was on the line when champion Tommy Cairo met Derek Domino on the special "Eddie Gilbert Memorial Brawl" card, and it was obvious from the start that Cairo would do anything to retain his title.

NWA North American champion Tommy Cairo drops an elbow on Derek Domino outside the ring. Though this was a ladder match, these two spent most of it on the arena floor. Cairo successfully defended his title.

Cairo tore into Domino with a vengeance as soon as the bell rang and dragged him into the crowd. The two men fought from one side of the National Guard Armory to the other, with Cairo punishing Domino with several nasty elbowdrops.

When the action shifted back inside the ring, Cairo pounded his challenger with the ladder. But just a few minutes later, both were outside the ring again. It was there that Domino mounted a comeback. He suplexed Cairo on the floor and whacked him with a garbage can.

At that point, Domino reentered the ring and tried to climb the ladder, but Cairo pulled him down from it. After the two exchanged blows for a while, they climbed the ladder simultaneously. Cairo, however, knocked his foe off with a single punch and grabbed his championship belt. Before Cairo could celebrate his win, the tag team known as The Dark Side entered the ring, and along with Domino, they attacked Cairo for several minutes before fleeing.

In other bouts: Knuckles Nelson pinned The Inferno Kid ... The Dark Side beat Harley Lewis & Blue Thunder by disqualification ... Dory Funk Jr. and Tommy Gilbert wrestled to a time-limit draw ... The Lost Boys beat The Greek Connection and Bad Attitude in a triangle match ... Johnny Gunn pinned Tommy Rich ... Kevin Christian, H.W. Starr, & Debbie Combs beat Rick Ratchet, Twiggy Ramirez, & Angel in a six-person match ... Ace Darling pinned Kid Flash ... Doug Gilbert pinned Jerry Lawler ... NWA champion Dan Severn beat Al Snow. □

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WINTER 1994 *WRESTLER* includes the must-read bonus section, "Wrestling From A To Z"—an alphabetical array of wrestling trends and turmoil! Four full-color pinups complete this sensational 88-page package!

MARCH 1990 *INSIDE WRESTLING* looks back at the decade of the '80s with a dazzling eight-page full-color section and a year-by-year review of the most significant events in the sport. Must reading for all fans!

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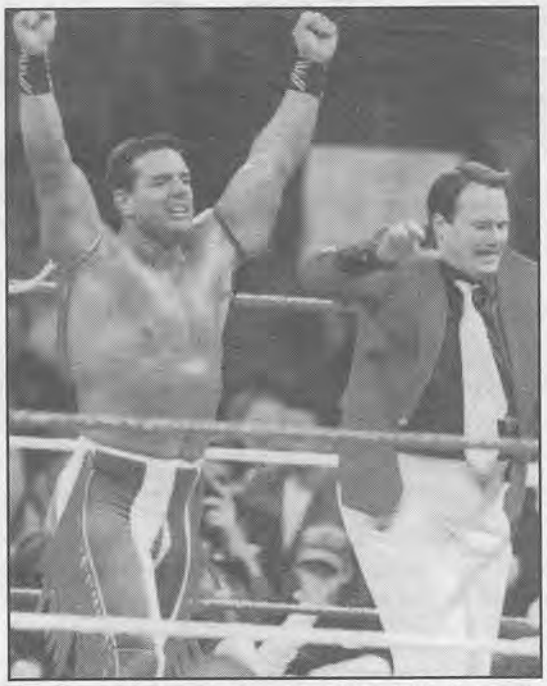
YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)



Jim Cornette spends a good portion of his time with Big Van Vader now, but that doesn't mean he has forgotten about the others in his camp, men like Davey Boy Smith.

was at his very best when I was there to help him out. And I ain't just talking about interfering in his matches here and there. He depended on me to scout out opponents for him, pick out their weaknesses, and come up with a strategy for him to beat them. In other words, I did all his thinking for him. If he wants to be truly great, he needs me in his corner again. Will it happen, you ask? Never say never, Nancy!"

* * *

Q: "This question is for Jim Cornette: Yokozuna recently left your stable of wrestlers to join the ranks of the WWF's fan favorites. Aren't you worried that maybe Davey Boy Smith and Owen Hart will do the same now that Big Van Vader is in your stable? You seem to be spending all your time with him and very little with the other two." —Grant Murphy, Spokane, WA

A: **"What a dumb question," replied Cornette. "I mean that's just flat-out dumb. It makes no sense. Wouldn't you rather have Vader on your side than against you? I know I would. I think I speak for Davey Boy and Owen when I say we're all thrilled to have Vader on board with us. The Yokozuna thing was all his fault. I will not tolerate incompetence, and Yokozuna was incompetent. That's why he was gone. I admit Yoko wasn't the same after I signed Vader. As soon as he saw Vader, he thought, *Oh, no, this guy's so much better than me. He's gonna make me look bad. I can't ever be as good as him.* And he was right. He'll never be as good as Vader. But Owen and Davey Boy know how to work with Vader. They won't be leaving my camp. I guarantee that!"**

* * *

Q: "I have a question for The Nasty Boys: You guys are known as the toughest brawling tag team in wrestling right now. You've faced Public Enemy a few times. How tough are they compared to some of the other great teams you've faced?" —Scott Nicholls, Little Rock, AR

A: **"I ain't so impressed!" barked Brian Knobs. "We faced the Steiners, Harlem Heat, The Blue Bloods, Cactus Jack. We fought all the tough teams, and Public Enemy ain't as tough as they think they are. We've fought 'em by the concession stands, in the ring, outside the ring, down the aisle, with foreign objects, without foreign objects, and they still ain't proved they're as tough as us. If they want us to respect them and tell everybody how great we think they are, then they gotta beat us! It don't matter how. They just gotta find a way, but I don't think they can! They just ain't as nasty as The Nasty Boys!"** □

Nasty Boy Brian Knobs bashes Rocco Rock of Public Enemy with a very large foreign object. Knobs says he isn't ready to call Public Enemy one of the toughest teams he has ever faced just yet.

BACK ISSUES OF THE Wrestler

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July 1990/Stories include: Poffo, Dusty-Savage, Luger-Flair, Doom, Blanchard.

September 1990/Stories include: Ultimate, Haynes, Luger, Doom, Tugboat.

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November 1990/Stories include: Luger & Sting, Beefcake, Race, Steiners.

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July 1991/Stories include: Flair-Fujinami, Nastys, Steiners, Savage.

August 1991/Stories include: Slaughter, Luger-Nikita, Hennig, Poffo.

September 1991/Stories include: Steiners vs. Sting & Luger, LOD, Cactus.

November 1991/Stories include: Luger, Steamboat, Piper, Global.

January 1992/Stories include: LOD, Badd, Hughes, Roberts, Gossett.

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November 1992/Stories include: Crush, Reed, Hennig, Sting, Rogers.

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December 1993/Stories include: Luger, Sting & Flair, Fytch, Luna, Austin.

January 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Cornette.

February 1994/Stories include: Vicious & Arn, Yokozuna, Vader-Cactus, steroids.

April 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Savage-Crush, Flair, Blayze, Adams, Boss.

May 1994/Stories include: Royal Rumble, Hulk minus bulk, Boss, Douglas-Sherri.

July 1994/Stories include: Flair-Hogan, DiBiase, Crockett, Douglas, WWF.

August 1994/Stories include: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Hart & Yokozuna, Badd.

October 1994/Stories include: Undertaker, Cactus, Scorpio-Sabu, Funk, Sheik.

November 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Owen, Bret, Badd, Lawler.

December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Luger, Vicious, Austin, Bomb.

January 1995/Stories include: Holiday gifts, DiBiase, Badd, Backlund, PG-13.

February 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Steiners, Undertaker, Sabu, Honky Tonk.

April 1995/Stories include: Harlem Heat, Lawler-Cornette, Beefcake, What If...?

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July 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Jannetty, Pillman, LT, Dundee.

August 1995/Stories include: Diesel, LT, Hogan, powerful people, Gargoyle.

October 1995/Stories include: Backlund, Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas.

November 1995/Stories include: Flair-Savage, Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade.

Winter 1995/Stories include: Sting-Hogan, Steiners, Yankem, Bodies, Arn.

January 1996/Stories include: Hogan, Douglas, anniversary review of 30 years.

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THE ROAD WARRIORS

*THEY'RE BACK ... finally. After 3½ years apart, The Road Warriors—Animal and Hawk—finally reunited in the ring on January 29, 1996, when they beat Meng and The Barbarian on **WCW Monday Nitro**. Since then, they have made it known they expect to win the WCW World tag team title in the **very** near future. Look out, Sting and Lex Luger! You have perhaps the best tag team of all-time on your tails!*

Much was expected of Hawk and Animal when manager "Precious" Paul Ellering first put them together in 1983 (they both began their careers in 1982), but no one knew exactly how dominant they would be in tag team wrestling over the next decade.

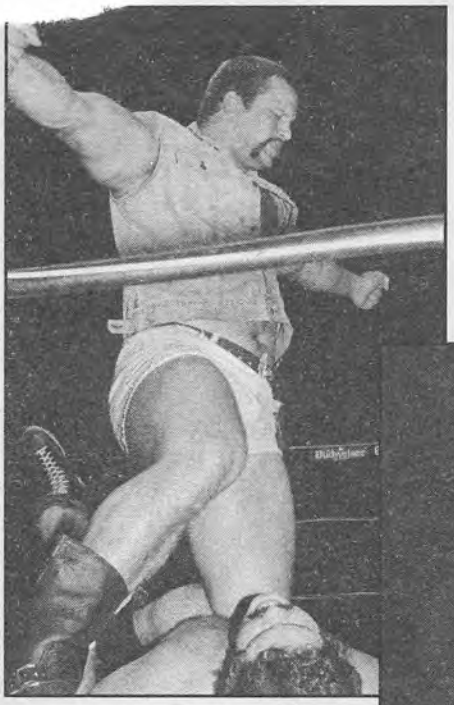
Shortly after the Warriors began teaming, they won the National tag team title in Georgia. It was the first of many, many titles they would win. In fact, The Road Warriors are the only team ever to have won world tag team titles in the NWA/WCW, the WWF, and the AWA. They won their NWA title by beating The Midnight Express in October of 1988, the AWA belts by beating Crusher and Baron Von Raschke in August of 1984, and the WWF title (as The Legion of Doom) by downing The Nasty Boys in August of 1991.

*Hawk and Animal are also former NWA six-man tag team champions (with Dusty Rhodes) and former All-Japan International tag team champions. If that isn't enough to impress you, consider that they were voted Tag Team of the Year by readers of **Pro Wrestling Illustrated** in each of their first three years as a team (1983-85) and again in 1988.*

But The Road Warriors' decade of dominance came to an abrupt end at WWF SummerSlam '92. They defeated Money Inc. at that pay-per-view, but it would be the last time they would team until this past January 29. Soon afterward, Animal injured his back, and that injury kept him out of action for nearly 3½ years.

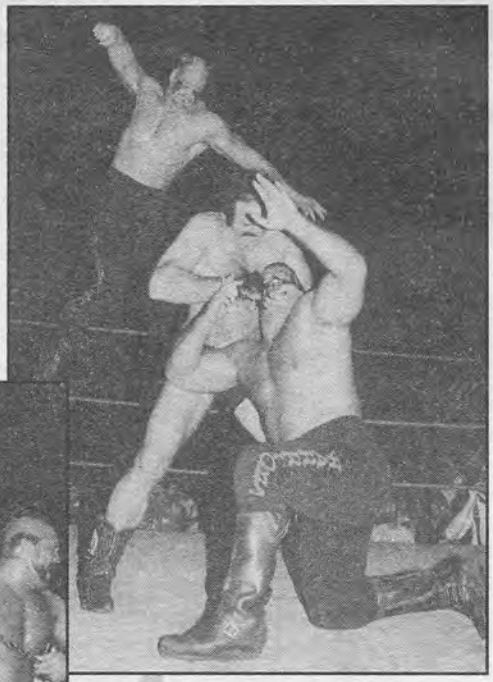
With Animal out, Hawk tried wrestling with other partners—and had some success with Kensuke Sasaki—and on his own, but all the while, he was waiting for the day Animal would tell him his back was okay again. That day has finally come.

*The Road Warriors got their first shot at Luger and Sting at **Nitro** on February 5, but they lost after Luger struck Animal with a foreign object. Don't be surprised if they gain revenge—and those WCW tag team belts—very soon. For now, they'll have to settle for a chance to shine in our "Spotlight."*

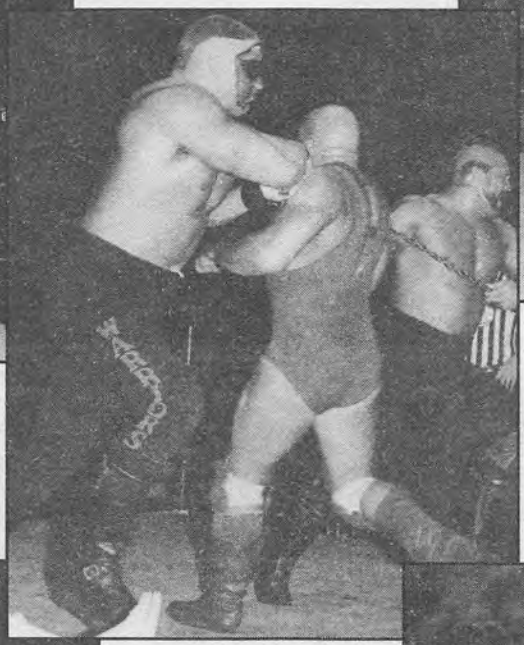


December 1982: The look was much different for Animal before he hooked up with Hawk. He wore no face paint and had no Mohawk. But he was as powerful then as he is now.

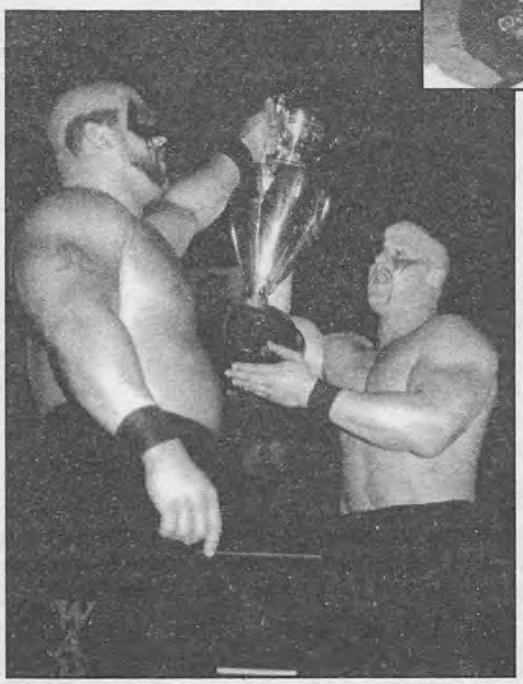
September 1984: The AWA was the site of the Warriors' first world title victory. In this AWA match, Hawk comes to the rescue of his partner, who is taking a beating from Blackjack Lanza.



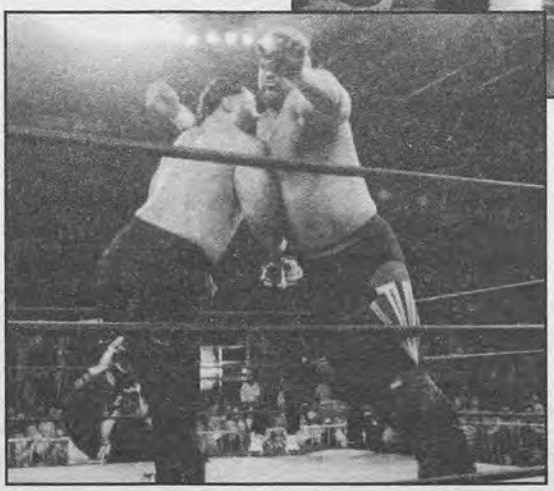
December 1984: The Road Warriors have had many great feuds over the years, but one of their all-time best was against the Koloffs in the NWA. They didn't hesitate to use the Koloffs' chain against them.



August 1992: Animal was in bad shape against Money Inc. here, but he and Hawk rallied to win this SummerSlam match. It was the last match they competed in together until January of this year.



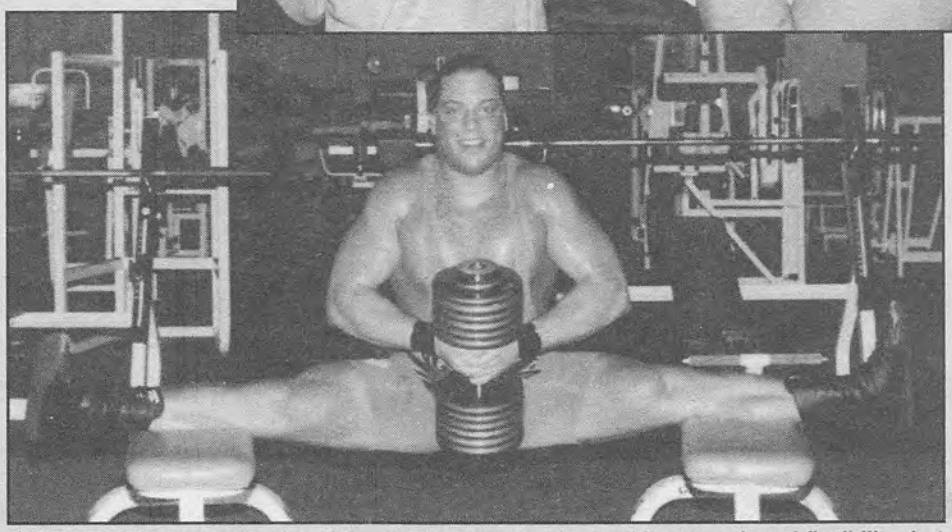
April 1986: Matches and titles aren't the only things The Road Warriors are good at winning. When they beat Ronnie Garvin and Magnum T.A. in the finals of the 1986 Crockett Cup, they took home $1-million.



January 1996: You had to feel a little sorry for The Barbarian. He and Meng were the first team to face The Road Warriors since 1992. They put up a good fight, but they lost.

Beyond The Squared Circle

▶ Well, he is blue, and he is a meanie, but if ECW valet Beulah McGillicutty had her way, we think she'd make The Blue Meanie change his name to The Blue Smelly!

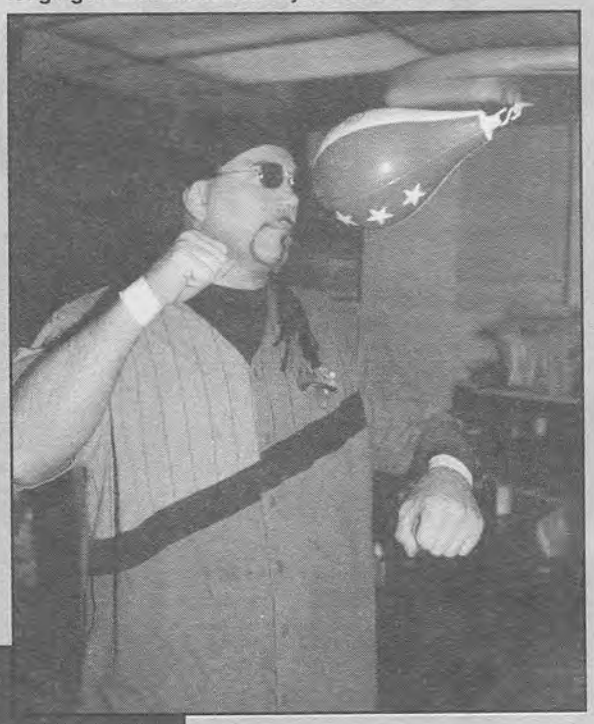


▲ Rob Van Dam spends a lot of time in the gym working on his strength and flexibility, but we'd hate to see what would happen if someone pulled those benches out from under him.

▲ Doug Gilbert and Tommy Rich were happy to answer fans' questions on America Online during the NWA's "Eddie Gilbert Memorial Brawl" card in February. That's Mark Coraluzzo, son of NWA promoter Dennis, doing the typing.

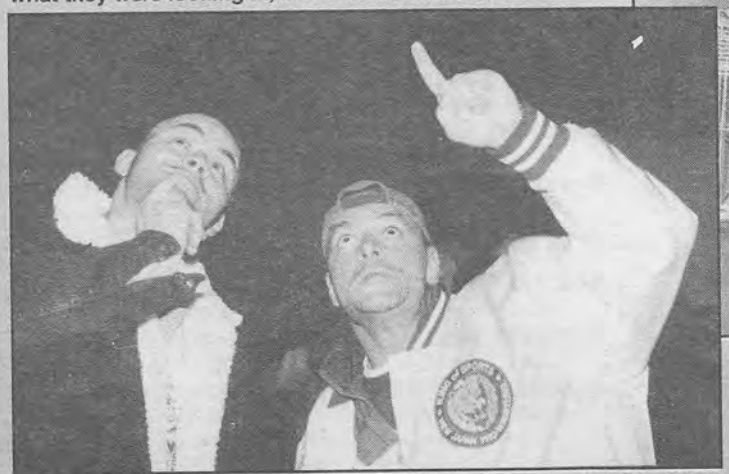
▲ Is it Elvis ... or The Honky Tonk Man? No, it's The King, a manager in International Pro Wrestling. Is he king when it comes to video games, too? We've seen his scores, and the answer is no.

▼ Is Public Enemy's Rocco Rock thinking about pursuing a boxing career, or he is just thinking about challenging former boxer Johnny B. Badd in WCW?



◀ It's massage-mania before an NWA show! First, Destiny (third from left) began massaging The Master, then Jim Cornette did the same to her, then Phil Schreiber did the same to James E.

▼ When Sabu points toward the ceiling, everybody looks. Konnan seemed fascinated by what he saw. When asked what they were looking at, both remained silent.



▲ Miss Patricia, manager of The Border Patrol in the USWA, is one of the most hated managers in Tennessee, and for good reason. That doesn't mean she's not kind to animals—doves in particular.

THE Wrestler

TOP 10

1 **BRET HART**
235, Calgary, Alberta
(1) WWF World champion

2 **RIC FLAIR**
243, Minneapolis, MN
(6) WCW World champion

3 **THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(3) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

4 **RANDY SAVAGE**
237, Sarasota, FL
(2) No. 2 contender: WCW World title

5 **SHAWN MICHAELS**
234, San Antonio, TX
(7) No. 3 contender: WWF World title

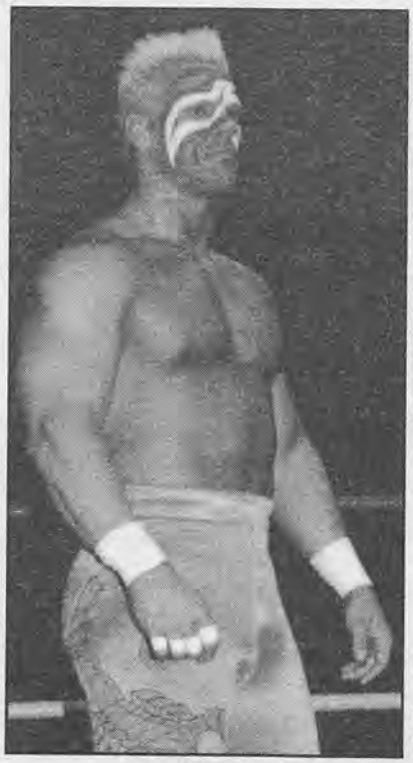
6 **HULK HOGAN**
275, Venice Beach, CA
(8) No. 3 contender: WCW World title

7 **GOLDUST**
254, Austin, TX
(10) WWF Intercontinental champion

8 **THE GIANT**
430, parts unknown
(4) No. 4 contender: WCW World title

9 **STING**
260, Venice Beach, CA
(-) No. 5 contender: WCW World title

10 **RAVEN**
235, Short Hills, NJ
(-) ECW heavyweight champion



Sting

TAG TEAMS

1 **LEX LUGER & STING**
Combined weight: 525 pounds
(1) WCW World tag team champions

2 **SKIP & ZIP**
Combined weight: 446 pounds
(3) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title

3 **THE ROAD WARRIORS**
Combined weight: 560 pounds
(4) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title

4 **HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN**
Combined weight: 531 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title

5 **HARLEM HEAT**
Combined weight: 550 pounds
(5) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title

6 **PG-13**
Combined weight: 471 pounds
(6) USWA tag team champions

7 **THE NASTY BOYS**
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title

8 **THE ELIMINATORS**
Combined weight: 459 pounds
(7) ECW tag team champions

9 **OWEN HART & DAVEY BOY SMITH**
Combined weight: 472 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

10 **PUBLIC ENEMY**
Combined weight: 583 pounds
(9) No. 4 contenders: WCW World tag title

WCW

World Champion:
RIC FLAIR
(2) 243, Minneapolis, MN

1—KONNAN
(1) 237, Mexico City, Mexico
2—RANDY SAVAGE
(C) 237, Sarasota, FL
3—HULK HOGAN
(5) 275, Venice Beach, CA
4—THE GIANT
(3) 430, parts unknown
5—STING
(6) 260, Venice Beach, CA
6—JOHNNY B. BADD
(8) 235, Macon, GA
7—LEX LUGER
(7) 265, Chicago, IL
8—ARN ANDERSON
(9) 249, Minneapolis, MN
9—LOCH NESS
(-) 632, Drumnadrochit, Scotland
10—ALEX WRIGHT
(-) 222, Berlin, Germany

WWF

World Champion:
BRET HART
(C) 235, Calgary, Alberta

1—GOLDUST
(1) 254, Austin, TX
2—THE UNDERTAKER
(2) 328, parts unknown
3—SHAWN MICHAELS
(3) 234, San Antonio, TX
4—AHMED JOHNSON
(5) 255, Pearl River, MS
5—YOKOZUNA
(-) 589, Samoa
6—STEVE AUSTIN
(-) 241, Dallas, TX
7—DAVEY BOY SMITH
(10) 245, Leeds, England
8—RODDY PIPER
(-) 247, Glasgow, Scotland
9—SAVIO VEGA
(9) 260, Vega Alta, Puerto Rico
10—DUKE DROESE
(-) 306, Chicago, IL

USWA

USWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
(2) 230, Memphis, TN
2—DOUG GILBERT
(6) 241, Lexington, TN
3—KOKO B. WARE
(5) 229, Union City, TN
4—JERRY LAWLER
(-) 234, Memphis, TN
5—TOMMY RICH
(1) 248, Hendersonville, TN
6—SPELLBINDER
(8) 273, parts unknown
7—TRACEY SMOTHERS
(3) 227, Atlanta, GA
8—J. J. ARMSTRONG
(4) 240, Marietta, GA
9—STEVEN DUNN
(-) 240, Tampa, FL
10—BRANDON BAXTER
(-) 204, Dallas, TX

ECW

ECW Champion:
RAVEN
(C) 235, Short Hills, NJ

1—THE SANDMAN
(2) 244, Philadelphia, PA
2—SHANE DOUGLAS
(-) 223, Pittsburgh, PA
3—SABU
(5) 220, Bombay
4—2 COLD SCORPIO
(1) 222, Denver, CO
5—CACTUS JACK
(6) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
6—TAZ
(4) 221, Massapequa, NY
7—STEVIE RICHARDS
(8) 227, Philadelphia, PA
8—MR. HUGHES
(10) 308, Kansas City, KS
9—MIKEY WHIPWRECK
(7) 187, New York, NY
10—AXL ROTTEN
(-) 302, Philadelphia, PA

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. Most Popular and Most Hated ratings are based on nationwide telephone and arena surveys of wrestling fans and on the volume and character of mail that comes to our offices. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended February 26, 1996

MOST POPULAR

1. **SHAWN MICHAELS**
   234, San Antonio, TX
   Last issue: No. 1 Most Popular
2. **HULK HOGAN**
   275, Venice Beach, CA
   Last issue: No. 4 Most Popular
3. **THE UNDERTAKER**
   328, parts unknown
   Last issue: No. 7 Most Popular
4. **STING**
   260, Venice Beach, CA
   Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular
5. **AHMED JOHNSON**
   255, Pearl River, MS
   Last issue: No. 8 Most Popular
6. **BRET HART**
   235, Calgary, Alberta
   Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular
7. **LEX LUGER**
   265, Chicago, IL
   Last issue: No. 10 Most Hated
8. **RODDY PIPER**
   247, Glasgow, Scotland
   Last issue: unrated
9. **RANDY SAVAGE**
   237, Sarasota, FL
   Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular
10. **YOKOZUNA**
    589, Samoa
    Last issue: unrated

MOST HATED

1. **RIC FLAIR**
   243, Minneapolis, MN
   Last issue: No. 2 Most Hated
2. **BIG VAN VADER**
   450, Denver, CO
   Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated
3. **GOLDUST**
   254, Austin, TX
   Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated
4. **KEVIN SULLIVAN**
   252, Boston, MA
   Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated
5. **OWEN HART**
   227, Calgary, Alberta
   Last issue: unrated
6. **THE GIANT**
   430, parts unknown
   Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated
7. **JERRY LAWLER**
   234, Memphis, TN
   Last issue: No. 8 Most Hated
8. **ARN ANDERSON**
   249, Minneapolis, MN
   Last issue: unrated
9. **DAVEY BOY SMITH**
   245, Leeds, England
   Last issue: unrated
10. **TAZ**
    221, Massapequa, NY
    Last issue: unrated

CUMULATIVE RATINGS

These ratings are based on the past 10 issues of this magazine. We have examined our ratings for each of these issues in our Top 10 and Tag Team categories only, and assigned each position a point value: 10 points for a first-place rating, nine for second place, and so on. The point values for all wrestlers in the past 10 issues have been compiled, with a possible maximum of 100 points. Each issue we'll present the top five finishers in each category. While our regular ratings reflect the past month, these cumulative ratings give an indication of wider trends in the sport.

SINGLES

1—BRET HART ..... 66 points
2—DIESEL ..... 64 points
3—HULK HOGAN ..... 61 points
4—STING ..... 59 points
5—RANDY SAVAGE ..... 52 points

TAG TEAMS

1—HARLEM HEAT ..... 74 points
2—OWEN HART & YOKOZUNA ..... 67 points
3—THE SMOKIN' GUNNS ..... 66 points
4—PG-13 ..... 38 points
5—BUNKHOUSE BUCK & DICK SLATER ..... 33 points

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
NOBUHIKO TAKADA
(C) 231, Yokohama, Japan

1—**JUSHIN LIGER**
(1) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
2—**KOJI KANEMOTO**
(4) 205, Tokyo, Japan
3—**RIKI CHOSHU**
(5) 246, Yamaguchi, Japan
4—**THE GREAT MUTA**
(2) 245, Tokyo, Japan
5—**KENSUKE SASAKI**
(3) 233, Tokyo, Japan
6—**SHINYA HASHIMOTO**
(8) 287, Gisu, Japan
7—**HIROSHI HASE**
(9) 225, Tokyo, Japan
8—**HIRYOSHI TENZAN**
(10) 270, Tokyo, Japan
9—**ANTONIO INOKI**
(6) 240, Tokyo, Japan
10—**SCOTT NORTON**
(–) 360, Minneapolis, MN

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
MITSUHARU MISAWA
(C) 228, Saitama, Japan

1—**TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
(1) 245, Tizhigi, Japan
2—**AKIRA TAUE**
(3) 265, Tokyo, Japan
3—**KENTA KOBASHI**
(2) 261, Tokyo, Japan
4—**YOSHINARI OGAWA**
(8) 202, Fichigi, Japan
5—**JOHNNY ACE**
(5) 250, San Bernadino, CA
6—**GARY ALBRIGHT**
(7) 343, Billings, MT
7—**ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER**
(–) 360, Sudan
8—**SHOHEI BABA**
(10) 283, Niigata, Japan
9—**THE PATRIOT**
(6) 251, Columbia, SC
10—**DOUG FURNAS**
(–) 243, Commerce, OK

AAA: AAA Champion—Perro Aguayo; 1—Cien Caras; 2—Psicosis; 3—Jerry Estrada; 4—Rey Misterio Jr.; 5—Heavy Metal; 6—La Parka; 7—Winners; 8—Octagon; 9—El Hijo Del Santo; 10—Zibernetico.

ACW: ACW Champion—T. Rantula; 1—Johnny Gunn; 2—Tito Santana; 3—Rick Martel; 4—Virgil; 5—Johnny Graham; 6—Mr. Hughes; 7—Lord Zoltan; 8—Frank Stalletto; 9—Glen Osbourne; 10—Ubas.

MTW: MTW Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Bruiser Bedlam; 2—D-Lo Brown; 3—Rock Stevens; 4—Chris Carter; 5—Machine Gun Kelly; 6—Bobo Brazil Jr.; 7—J.T. Lightning; 8—Johnny Paradise; 9—Brad Armstrong; 10—Ray Roberts.

PCW: PCW Champion—Akita Kaos; 1—Skip; 2—D-Lo Brown; 3—Reckless Youth; 4—King Kong Bundy; 5—Ray Odyssey; 6—Jimmy Deo; 7—Mark Mest; 8—Johnny Graham; 9—Boo Bradley; 10—Maxx Crimson.

PWA: PWA Champion—The Hater; 1—Kamikaze Kid; 2—J.B. Trask; 3—Horace the Psychopath; 4—Lenny Lane; 5—Dan Jesser; 6—The Mangler; 7—Nailz; 8—Charlie Norris; 9—Blacktop Bully; 10—The Nightstalker.

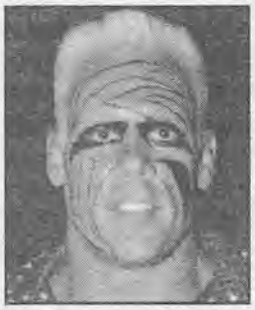
PWF: PWF Champion—Rick Morton; 1—Terry Austin; 2—Italian Stallion; 3—George South; 4—Gladiator II; 5—Flaming Youth; 6—Star Ryder; 7—Austin Steele; 8—Russian Assassin II; 9—Cruel Connection II; 10—Tyrone Knox.

RATINGS ANALYSIS

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 20 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans

Tag team vacancy. As if the WWF didn't already have enough tag team problems, it ran into another one in January when **Billy Gunn** suffered a fairly serious neck injury and had to have surgery to repair a ruptured vertebra. Because Billy needed quite a bit of time to recover from this injury, the WWF forced him and his brother, **Bart**, to give up the WWF World tag team belts. For the time being, the WWF has lost its best tag team.

And because of that, **The Smokin' Gunns** have dropped out of our tag team ratings altogether. The only WWF teams to make the ratings this issue are **Skip** and **Zip**, **Henry** and **Phineas Godwinn**, and **The Bushwhackers**, because at press time, they were the three top contenders to the vacant WWF tag team title. Not exactly three of the all-time great teams, are they?



Sting

The strange saga of Lex and Sting. For now (but maybe not for much longer), WCW World tag team champions **Lex Luger** and **Sting** remain the number-one team in our tag team rankings, but a few people have written to ask us why both men are still ranked individually in the WCW ratings and, on occasion, in our overall top 10. That's because neither man is devoting all his time to tag team wrestling. Sting accepted some matches against **The Giant** and others back in February, and Luger actually won the WCW TV title on February 17.

Lex defeated **Johnny B. Badd** for that belt on a card in Baltimore, Maryland, but he held the championship for less than 24 hours, as Badd won it back the next night in Norfolk, Virginia.

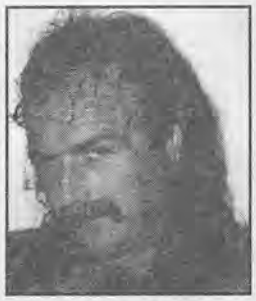
Sting and Luger have both proved that they can be forces on the singles circuit even while they are busy defending their tag team belts against the likes of **The Road Warriors**, **Harlem Heat**, and **Public Enemy**.

Another issue involving Luger that we need to deal with here is whether he belongs on our Most Hated list, our Most Popular list, both, or neither.

I can't believe people still cheer for Lex Luger, wrote reader Sara Balasky of Grand Rapids, Michigan. *He's always using foreign objects to win his matches, and he still shows no respect toward* ***Hulk Hogan****. I've lost respect for Sting. If I were him, I'd rather give up my tag team belt than share a title with a man so despicable and self-centered. Luger will eventually burn him, and I won't feel sorry for Sting when it finally does happen!*

Unfortunately, that reaction to Luger's actions isn't all that typical. Luger is hearing a lot more cheers than boos from fans right now. Most seem to have forgiven him for brutally sneak-attacking Hogan at Halloween Havoc 1995. They're supporting him in his matches with Sting and even cheering him on occasion when he wrestles WCW fan favorites one-on-one. For now, we'll reluctantly give him a spot in the Most Popular rankings and keep him out of Most Hated. As always, though, that could soon change.

Out with the new and in with the old? So much for the "New Generation" of the WWF, huh? Okay, so maybe younger stars such as **Ahmed Johnson**, **The Kid**, and **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** are still making an impact in that federation, but how long will it be before **The Ultimate Warrior** cracks the WWF ratings again? Rumor has it that Warrior is negotiating with the WWF again.



Jake Roberts

And what about **Jake Roberts**? He *retired* last spring, but he wasn't able to stay away from the ring for even a full year. He returned to the WWF at the 1996 Royal Rumble and has defeated WWF stars such as **Tatanka** and **Dr. Isaac Yankem** since then. He even gave **Shawn Michaels** a tough battle before getting pinned by "The Heartbreak Kid" in a match in February. Roberts has made his first appearance in our WWF top 10 in years. And because of the positive reaction he is getting in arenas around the country, we have also placed him in our Most Popular rankings.

Until next time ... If you have any questions or comments about what you see on this page, or in our ratings section in general, as always, we'd love to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

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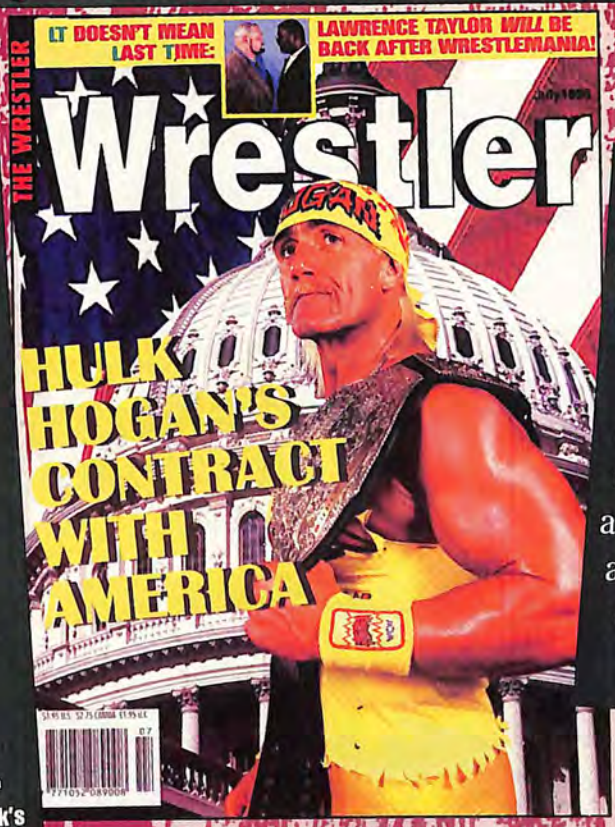

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